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FEBRUARY 2003 ✂ VOL. 28 NO. 2



AP Photo/Pat Roque

On the Cover

A U.S. Special Forces soldier mounts his machine gun on top of a truck in the southern Philippines.

AMERICA AT WAR

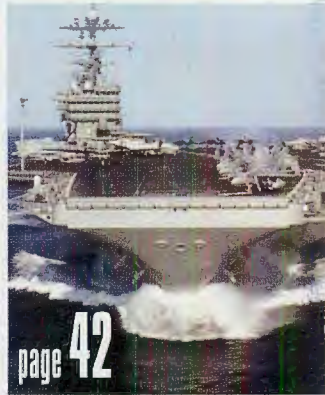
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| CIRCLE OF DEATH by Al J. Venter Israel is confronting a six-nation Arab mob bent on its obliteration. Oh, yeah, and two of these are working on atomic bombs. What are the down-the-road predictions? _____ | 38 |
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Al J. Venter

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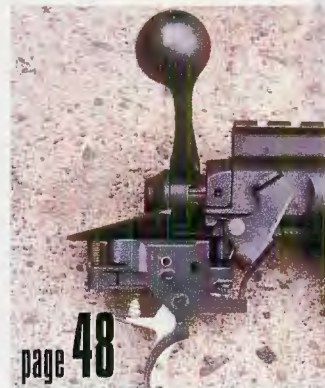
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U.S. Navy/Jeffrey G. Katz

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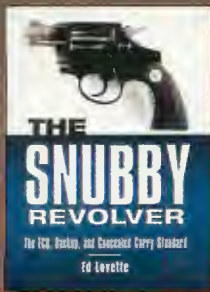
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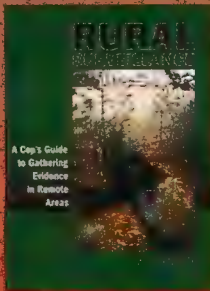
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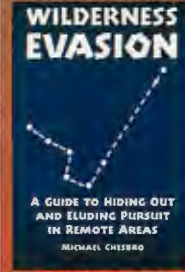
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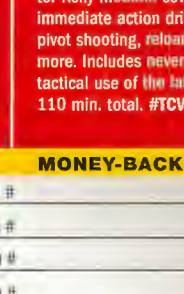
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Command Guidance

BY WAYNE LAPIERRE

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

No Such Thing

It takes little journalistic sweat to reel off another tired litany of soundbites that smear lawful gun owners as simple-minded obstructionists to whatever the anti-gun proposal du jour happens to be.

Why, despite their investigative resources, do media types rarely trouble themselves to evaluate firearm policy beyond "hey-that-sounds-good-to-me?"

Maybe because they'd miss a chance to coin a new hateful NRacial slur. Like *The New York Times'* [recent] repulsive affront that our proud organization "can always be counted on to provide a comfort zone for the perpetrators of gun violence in America."

Or maybe because they'd find that "gun-control" proposals always collapse under the gentlest burden of common sense.

For example, ballistic "fingerprinting" is a misleading misnomer. There's no such thing.

It's a fairytale unrelated to the proven crime-solving tool of ballistic imaging, which we've always supported. Ballistic imaging can connect a bullet at a crime scene with the gun that fired it, within limited circumstances of a specific investigation.

But no firearm has a permanent "fingerprint" or "DNA." Ballistic abrasions change over time with normal use, and

can be easily altered, rendering any "fingerprint" database obsolete — which alone assumes that 80 million lawful gun owners line up to register their guns. And all criminals, too.

Even if a criminal was dumb enough to steal such a "fingerprinted" gun, he'd be smart enough not to leave his name and address.

That's why the NRA joins the Fraternal Order of Police in questioning such an immense and irrational diversion of taxpayer dollars and police manpower.

But, why isn't this obvious to thinking journalists?

Is their judgment suddenly impaired by the intoxicating promise of every new restrictive firearm policy?

Meanwhile they ignore real news, like the tragically instructive stories unfolding in England and Australia where recently disarmed citizens are being terrorized by violent criminals at rates exceeding ours.

The NRA fiercely supports plans that get the bad guys without getting the good guys. To tell the difference, just ask yourself:

Will criminals comply?
Will it take police off the streets to do paperwork?

And when it doesn't work, what's next?

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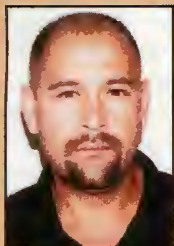
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Sex Slavery Abolitionist



I am a regular reader of your magazine and I love it. The series of articles on sex slavery has made me decide to devote my life to helping to free those unjustly oppressed. I am a college student at Notre Dame and there are some "peace" activist groups here that oppose the war on Iraq and invariable support the regime there. I am inquiring whether or not there are any websites, newspaper articles or manuscripts in addition to the articles on sex slavery in *SOF*, that I might be able to show these people how brutal of a dictator Saddam is and also how oppression must be fought against. I tried the links in your November issue of the mag and I haven't come up with any needed Iraq info. I hope you will assist me in my search as I go on and look further on my own. Thank you very much for your help, for telling the truths that no one else will, and for making such an excellent magazine.

Sincerely,
Patrick Nagorski

Prostitution is punishable (and punished) by death in Iraq, so is kept pretty much under wraps. However, documenting human-rights abuses, outrages and atrocities by Saddam should present no problem at all. We suggest you get on the web and go to a good search engine such as Google, and punch up "human rights abuses Iraq," or "Iraq" with qualifiers such as "poison gas," "Kurds," "torture," "genocide," or "children" and you'll have so many thousand hits you'll spend long nights winnowing the wheat from the chaff (and there will be chaff, as in the runup to any predictable conflict, both sides start cranking out disinformation). One particularly good (and without a political axe to grind) organization is the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, who you will also find on the web. Good luck with your efforts on behalf of the oppressed.

China Story Kudos



Finally!!!
It was great to see something on China! Your story "unrestricted Warfare" is just what I thought was going on. Also, will try to get their book. Could be good reading. Of course, no one read Hitler's book before WWII. Maybe we can learn something. Was wondering if you could get into it a little more? Like Chinese strategies, tactics, equipment, etc.?

Did notice that the Chinese were dealing with Clinton as directed in Sun Tzu in economic warfare, line by line. Unfortunately for us, he was too dense to realize it. I'll bet, Clinton still thinks that they are his good buddies. Tell Doug Lucas, good job! Very few seem to have picked up on China's games. I know that I asked about this a long time ago about China. But, maybe the time might be right, now. Once again, *SOF* is the only one around that has the balls to print the truth.

Jesse Mills
Vernon, Arizona

Reaction to Reaction



I had a bit of a chuckle, and did a lot of head-shaking at the write up on the reaction from people in Canada on the sniper article that you so generously presented in your magazine. Our own media rarely — if ever — discussed Canadian field ops, especially those involving the death of enemy combatants.

During the Kosovo campaign, the Canadian Air Force carried out many sorties over Yugoslavia, but were FORBIDDEN from ever showing gun camera film of the ops. Hell, during the Bosnian conflict, the PPCLI (the same unit that you discussed in your article) was involved in a battle with the Croatian Army in a place called the Medak Pocket. That was in 1992, and the DND did not admit it even happened until 1998, and only recently (2002) decided to award a decoration to the battalion of troops involved in the action.

The Canadian media are almost uniformly made up of a bunch of whining, bleeding heart leftovers from the sixties that make the hippie longhairs that graced the campuses of Berkeley look like a bunch of hard-core republicans. That is changing, slowly, as the editors of our major papers are replaced with younger and more even-handed people.

However, the largest culprit in this matter is often the DND itself. The Canadian defense department has made zero attempt to connect with the public, and is thus seen as being a nasty, secretive bunch doing horrible things to other people, deservedly or otherwise. The DND has not done anything to extol the virtues of our fine people in uniform, and to establish a base of support in the community. Thus, most people are oblivious to what the military is or does, and the only people who send in letters to the editor in Canada are the hard-core leftists who think the army should shed its weapons in favor of UN berets and flags. I would underline that this is NOT the opinion of most Canadians.

Canada should not be judged by the socialist blathering of

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a few boneheads. I am Canadian, proudly so, and would do whatever it took to defend this country, and in my family are six veterans of WW2, one from Korea, and one from Vietnam. We have three family members that reside in a field in Belgium, having made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom in the First World War.

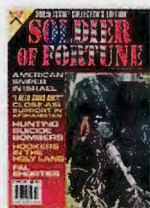
Canada is, and will always be, ready to do its part, never doubt that. Piss on the critics and whiners. When push comes to shove, we will be there to take care of the business at hand, regardless of the hand-wringing of incompetent politicians and socialist pundits. We always have.

Good article. Having spoken to a few of my old chums, I can assure you, our troops appreciated that "Attaboy."

Best Regards,
Chris Dougherty, P.Eng.
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Yep, there was probably more of Thoreau and Emerson in Jefferson than conventional history acknowledges — it's just that he didn't often delineate basic freedoms, as they were held to be "self-evident."

Treads Triumphant



I thought that the feature on the Canadian air-mechanized vehicles was well-done, however, when talking about the U.S. Army playing catch-up and developing their own air-mechanized section, I would like to refer you to the NH Army National Guard. I am a member of C company 3/172 Inf. (Mtn.), who currently operate the same vehicle, only as the M1973A1. This is the same 6-banger tracked vehicle as mentioned in the article, and has been in service for a long time. We find it especially useful in the soft snow that frequently hangs up our HUMVEES. It would take minimal retrofit to make this awesome vehicle that we swear by, air-mobile.

To make sure the vehicle is the same as the one in the feature, I would refer to the NH Army Guard website for the vehicle specs: nharmyguard/units/mtninf.htm and click on the SUSV link under equipment. Also appreciated the Guard feature, it feels good knowing we count too. Just let Pres. Bush know we are ready, willing and able. A unit as specialized as ours should be out there helping the cause. We especially would have been useful during the Anaconda snafu.

Continued on page 78

Jefferson: Freedom to Be Left Alone



I disagree with James Taranto in "Command Guidance," December 2002.

I agree with Thomas Jefferson who said, basically, that "the greatest freedom is the freedom to be left alone."

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John Yashinski
Montana

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Bulletin Board

SOFers Stop Drugs On Mexican Border

Next month *SOF* will publish the first of a two-part article on a recent volunteer operation on the Mexican border where *SOF* Chief Foreign Correspondent Rob Krott led a 20-man tactical team of military and law-enforcement veterans (mostly former *SOF* conventioners) that interdicted drug-smugglers and confiscated several bales of marijuana. Ranch Rescue, a grassroots volunteer network dedicated to protecting and defending private property rights for all Americans, conducted "Operation Hawk" in Arizona. Ranch Rescue, with chapters in six states and growing nationally, was formed in 2000 by former U.S. Army infantry officer Jack Foote, of Abilene, Texas. Foote was inspired by news accounts of Cochise County rancher and businessman Roger Barnett who for years has patrolled his ranch east of Douglas, Arizona, sometimes detaining illegal border-crossers, *narcotraffickers*, and criminals. Until now, Ranch Rescue operations have focused on helping ranchers fix fences and clean up trash, though they generally worked well-armed and wearing uniforms and always on private property at the invitation of the landowners. This is the first time the group has mounted an operation that focused on surveilling and interdicting criminal trespassers on private property. The focus of Operation Hawk was to observe and document the passage of armed drug smugglers over private property. In the course of the mission more than 280 pounds of illegal



courtesy Rob Krott

Chief Foreign Correspondent Rob Krott with drugs interdicted near the Mexican border with Arizona.

drugs, dropped by cross-border drug-smugglers accosted trespassing on private property by Krott's tactical team, were turned over to the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office. Stay tuned for more information, or contact: Ranch Rescue, 1071 North Judge Ely Boulevard, PMB 6460, Abilene, Texas 79601-3853; phone: 915-888-0518 (voice mail only); on the web at www.ranchrescue.com; or contact them by email: volunteer@ranchrescue.com.

Friendly Fire Fiasco

If there is any tragedy in combat worse than a friendly-fire casualty, it is the friendly-fire death of a brave and loyal ally, such as the deaths of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry troopers Sgt. Marc Leger, Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer, Pte. Richard Green and Pte. Nathan Smith, which occurred in Afghanistan on 17 April 2002. And if there is a wrong more grievous than such an accidental death, it is the purposeful shifting of blame by those responsible, to the shoulders of innocent participants who, acting in good faith on the best information they had, were the tools for such a tragedy. Such appears to be the case of Majors Bill Umbach and Harry Schmidt, coalition pilots in the incident of 17 April — and even Colonel Dave Nichols, Air Expedition Group Commander who had the integrity and guts to defend the pilots and lay the blame where it should rest, and who was recommended for "discipline up to and including non-judi-



SOF Staff

On a recent trip to Bogota, SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown hunkers down behind a Parker-Hale sniper rifle, under tutelage of Colombian troop. Look for a Colombian sitrep in an upcoming issue.

"Hell, you could win a fight just by pulling this mother out!"

Jim Bowie himself would be impressed by Cold Steel's Laredo Bowie knife, which features a heavy 10-1/2" blade made from our exclusive CarbonV[®] steel. It's expertly heat-treated utilizing seven tempering operations and flat-ground for incredible cutting power and perfect balance. The ferocious cutting edge terminates in a dagger-sharp point, just like the one carried by Jim Bowie himself. And if needed for self-defense, the 4-1/2" long fully-sharpened clip point facilitates a deadly back cut as well as other conventional cuts and stabbing attacks.

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cial punishment" for his honesty. Umbach and Schmidt have been recalled to active duty to face trial, and a serious miscarriage of justice — not to mention those responsible for the accident walking — is in the offing. Details of the case are available on the web at: www.183rdpilotsdefensefund.com. You will note the website is called a defense fund: These pilots' potential legal costs are staggering, and your donation to: 183rd Pilots Defense, c/o VFW Post 10302, 2349 Stockyard Rd., Springfield, IL 62702 will help. *Punch up the website and read the details, then donate, volunteer your time or otherwise do what you can to help defend these innocent men — which will then clear the way for laying blame where it belongs.*

Rhodie Refugees

In his psychotic and long-standing campaign to turn what was once one of the most prosperous and advanced nations in Africa into a Neolithic fiefdom, President Robert Mugabe now appears to be embarking on a campaign of forced emigration of displaced farm workers and their families. International humanitarian aid agencies report that the workers are being forcibly relocated to areas near Zimbabwe's borders, and from there "encouraged" to leave into neighboring states, with only what they can carry on their backs. In one particular, aid agencies document the forced relocation of 5,000 to Gaierezi in the Zambezi valley, where they were dumped with no seeds, no tools, no way to make a living. Uncounted thousands of workers have been displaced as predominantly white-owned farms are seized and either passed to Mugabe cronies who cannot farm, or stripped.

For ongoing updates on an ongoing atrocity, go to www.zmnews on the web.

A Worthy Monument

Longtime SOF staffer Bob MacKenzie died almost seven years ago, but his memory lives on. Killed by rebel guerrillas in Sierra Leone in 1995 (see cover story "Death of A Warrior" July 1995), MacKenzie had traveled for SOF for nearly 10 years, visiting war zones, training troops, and generally carrying on the good fight. Having spent a decade in the Rhodesian Special Air Service, he was an expert on Africa

and African conflicts. His wife, Sibyl MacKenzie, often went with him. Since his death, she has written three novels drawing on her adventures with Bob, publishing under the name M. Wilson McReady. They are available at realwarstories.com, an internet website offering selective military fiction and non-fiction, both as e-books and in paper versions. The first book, *Mission Mozambique*, is set in Mozambique, where the MacKenzies trudged 350 miles to visit with the guerrilla fighters and rescue a hostage. The second volume, *The River of Death*, takes place in Bosnia, where both MacKenzies joined the Bosnian-Croatian Army in the winter of 1994. The third book in the series takes place in Sierra Leone, and will be published next year. Although fiction, these works have the authenticity and flavor that can only be written by an author who has been there, done that. Highly recommended.

Chechen Terrorists To Be Buried In Pigskin

According to the Russian newspaper *Moskovski Komsomol*, Russian security forces have decided to bury the terrorists from the recent hostage siege at a Moscow theater, wrapped in pig's skin. The aim is to deter potential Islamic terrorists from future attacks.

The theory is, since *Shahidi* (Jihad martyrs) believe that through their terrorist acts they ascend immediately to heaven, then wrapping their corpses in "unclean" pigskin prevents them from entering heaven for eternity.

Special Feringhi?

According to Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Rivers Johnson, Army Special Operations Command is developing a legislative proposal similar to the Lodge Act of the 1950s, which was designed to raise a force of Warsaw-Pact expats and refugees at a time when it seemed likely that the Soviets would invade Western Europe, but this time around it would emphasize the Middle East or Central Asia, where American operatives look out of place. Details of the proposal are being worked out at the Kennedy Special Warfare School at Ft. Bragg, N.C.

Faced with a crucial shortage of native Arabic speakers, Army Special Forces are already stretched thin

around the globe. No indication has yet been given as to the numbers involved, or whether other members of the SpecOps community would also participate in such a program.

al-Qaeda Recruitment Videos

Portions of what are believed to be secret al-Qaeda training tapes show a rare glimpse of life inside the terrorist organization. The source was allegedly sent the tapes by the controversial Islamic cleric Abu Hamza of the Finsbury Park Mosque. Video on these tapes indicates links between Abu Hamza and his Finsbury Park Mosque to al-Qaeda, as well as Kashmiri, Chechen and Palestinian terrorists and the individuals behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The tapes also feature discussion about the bombing of the American Embassy in Africa and how al-Qaeda was responsible, and Abu Hamza suggests the reasons for the assault. His knowledge is detailed enough that he appears to have obvious links to the attackers. In another of the videos there is a defense of Islam and a tirade against Christians and Jews. The speaker says there is a "crusade" against Islam by the Jews and that Israel wants to destroy Islam and dominate the world. View at www.intellnet.org/resources/abuhamazvids/index.html.

What 'R' You Smokin'? #1

From the "Conspiranoia!" site comes a story bylined by Gordon Thomas that fills us in on the fact that "Israel's crack-shot snipers are to be equipped with 'invisible' nickel-tipped bullets [sic]" According to the story, they "have no give-away muzzle flash when fired — and there is no recoil. The bullets are designed to be used in rifles CIA armourers have developed. They have twice the range of ordinary sniper weapons and a killing accuracy of a mile."

Shazzam!

The story goes on to recant how the weapons were originally designed to be used by Special Forces in Afghanistan, but just before a recent visit to Israel by George Tenet, some 50 of the "state-of-the-art" weapons and 10,000 rounds of "invisible" [sic] bullets were secretly flown to Israel aboard an El Al freighter to Tel Aviv.

What 'R' You Smokin'? #2

From the radical Islamic website www.almuhajiroun.com comes the hot news that:

"... three Afghan nationals are now receiving medical treatment at a local hospital in Kabul after being tortured in [Camp X-Ray] Cuba. One of the three released Afghans was Haji Faiz Muhammad, aged 105 years old, a resident of Uruzgan Province. Despite being over a Century-old, U.S. forces did not hesitate nor show any compassion when they arrested him after being wrongly informed by their Northern Alliance allies that he was a senior Taliban Commander. Now after months of imprisoning this 105-year-old man in shackles, leaving him exposed to the burning Cuban sun vulnerable to a whole spectrum of life-threatening diseases, they have finally released this elderly man admitting that he had nothing to do with the Taliban. In the relative safety of Kabul, Haji Faiz Muhammad stated that the U.S. troops performed countless barbaric torture techniques both before and after shifting him to Cuba in attempt to get him to divulge information"

Yep, you read it here first.

Rejected "Research"

Michael Bellesiles, author of the highly criticized *Arming America* was once the darling of gun-ban extremists for writing a book that "proved" gun ownership was a rare thing in America prior to the 1840s — he even was awarded the semi-lofty Bancroft Prize for his "historical" research. As oft happens when a "researcher" confuses "historical" with "creative," Bellesiles may be choking on his ill-gained laurels. Once a tenured professor at Emory University, the interim dean at Emory has accepted Bellesiles' resignation effective 31 December 2002: And a 40-page indictment of Bellesiles' fraudulent work written by fellow scholars noted they were "seriously troubled by Professor Bellesiles' scholarly conduct," as "the failure to clearly identify his sources moves into the realm of falsification." Well, fellows, don't be too hard on him. How do you expect a "scholarly researcher" to identify sources he made up? ☒

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BY BILL BAGWELL

Cold Steel's Laredo Bowie

A New Classic

When we heard that Cold Steel was bringing to market a new Bowie knife to replace the Trailmaster, we immediately contacted Lynn Thompson to see if the rumor was true. We were informed that it was not. The Trailmaster would not be replaced, we were told, but Cold Steel was indeed bringing a bigger, more traditionally styled, Bowie to market. That was more than a year ago, and at that time, *SOF* was promised one of the very first production models for testing. Well, the Laredo is here, and it was worth the wait. This is a superb Bowie knife, and *SOF* is the first to bring you an in-depth look at a knife that is long overdue in the marketplace.

My affection for Bowie knives is well-known. It comes from the fact that of all the knives of the world, none does so many things so well as does the Bowie. It is a marvelous broad-spectrum cutting tool, and when called into service as an edged weapon, in the hands of a skilled and knowledgeable practitioner, it is without peer. No other knife will touch it.

There are those who doubt this today. I will offer a quote from a decision by the Texas Supreme Court in 1859 for their consideration. It was written by Judge Oran M. Roberts, in the matter of John Cockburn vs. STATE (Texas). Judge Roberts was a distinguished and respected jurist of his day, and lived in the time frame when a Bowie knife was part of everyday life. It is worth noting that Judge Roberts was writing from the perspective of personal experience, as he is known to have killed three men by his own hand with a Bowie knife.

Judge Roberts writes, "The right to carry a Bowie Knife for lawful defense is secured, and must be admitted. It is an exceeding destructive weapon. It is difficult to defend against it, by any degree of bravery, or any amount of skill. The gun or pistol may miss its aim, and when discharged, its dangerous character is lost, or diminished at least. The sword may be parried. With these weapons men fight for the sake of combat, to



Cold Steel's Laredo has looks to burn — and this classic Bowie with traditional coffin handle and a 10-1/2" Carbon V steel blade offers performance to match its looks.



Author demonstrates proper Bowie fighting stance with the Laredo. Note the traditional-carry of the sheath: The sheath design allows both concealed- and outside-carry.

satisfy the laws of honor, not necessarily with the intention to kill, or with a certainty of killing, when the intention exists. The Bowie knife differs from these in its device and design; it is the instrument of almost certain death."

When men go into harm's way and are forced to fight to defend their own lives or the lives of their loved ones, they will not knowingly select a sec-



Author cleaved 10" of 2x6 pine across the grain with the Laredo, demonstrating the great power of a proper Bowie knife. The Laredo handled this task with ease.

ond-rate weapon, given a choice. This is why prudent men, faced with the prospect of edged-weapons combat, carry a Bowie knife.

Does It All ...

This might be a good place to point out that the Laredo is not a special-purpose-designed fighting Bowie knife with a narrow focus. The Ontario Hell's Belle falls into that category. Rather, the Cold Steel Laredo is simply a Bowie knife, period. And that is a Very Good Thing. A Bowie knife such as the Laredo does more things well than does any other edged implement. It will stab with the efficiency of a dagger, and make a larger wound channel in the process. It will slice nearly as well as a straight razor. It will hack and chop and make heavy cuts as well as a cleaver. It has a backcut capability possessed by no other knife. A good Bowie, in short, is the most complete cutlery package available in a single implement.

How does the Laredo stack up against the competition, say the Ontario Hells Belle? Very well, indeed. While the Ontario Hell's Belle is a superior fighting implement, the Laredo does many things better than does the Hell's Belle. This is no real surprise, as the Hell's Belle is a focused fighting Bowie, and was designed as such. It is lighter, quicker, has a half-inch reach advantage over the Laredo, and has a functional fighting guard that is not present on the Laredo. If everything else is equal, the Hell's Belle will win the knife fight. But that's about it.

The Laredo is one of those rare knives that feels good and fits nearly everyone that picks it up. It sports a 10-1/2-inch blade that is a hefty and proper 5/16 of an inch thick, and is equipped

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with a functional sharpened clip point. Cold Steel's proven and excellent Carbon V steel provides the cutting performance and strength that will meet the demands of any occasion, be it camping or combat.



... And Does It Well

Functionally, the Laredo is nearly perfect. The coffin handle delivers both good looks and an ergonomically correct, secure grip. The edges of the handle, collar,

The balance and weight of the Laredo are spot on, and this, along with the 10-1/2-inch blade length, give the Laredo a very real advantage over the Hell's Belle in the ability to make heavy cuts. The Laredo is a more effective knife in a wilderness or survival environment, plain and simple.

The Laredo also has looks to burn. At nearly 15-1/2-inches in length from tip to butt, with brass guard and collar and a rosewood-colored coffin handle, the Laredo is an eye full. It comes with a proper oiled leather sheath that has a brass frog and is reinforced with brass rivets. The sheath is well-made, and allows for concealed-inside-the-waistband carry, as well as the conventional outside carry through the belt. This sheath is not only versatile and highly functional, it is also period correct for those such as re-enactors or SASS participants who want to add a Bowie knife to their equipment. The Laredo is correct for the historical time frame of 1840 to 1880, and there are numerous references to the fact that the cowboy considered the Bowie knife to be an indispensable part of his gear. James H. Cook gives prominent mention to the use of the Bowie knife by cowboys in the 1870-1880 period in his autobiography *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier*, for those wanting to research this themselves.

and guard are carefully contoured so that there is no pinching or discomfort passed on to the users hand during hard use. The flat-ground blade cuts well and sharpens easily. If the test Laredo has a single flaw, it is that the guard-to-blade fit has a slight gap that I have not seen in other fixed-blade models from Cold Steel. At that, the fit of the guard to the blade on the Laredo is superior to that on the vast majority of original Sheffield Bowies I have examined over the years. Balance of the knife is nearly perfect for a broad-spectrum-application Bowie knife, balance in this sense meaning the distribution of the weight so that it works for, rather than against, you.

But there is another kind of balance, and that is balanced performance. This is where the Laredo really stands out. This knife delivers balanced, across-the-board performance. It has no real weaknesses, and does everything that a knife should do, extremely well. It is a classic Bowie knife in every sense of the word. Once again, Lynn Thompson and Cold Steel have raised the ante in the cutlery game.

The Laredo is available from Cold Steel Knives, Dept. SOF, 3036-A Seaborg Ave., Ventura, CA 93003; phone: 800-255-4716; fax: 805-642-9727; on the web at www.coldsteel.com . ✂

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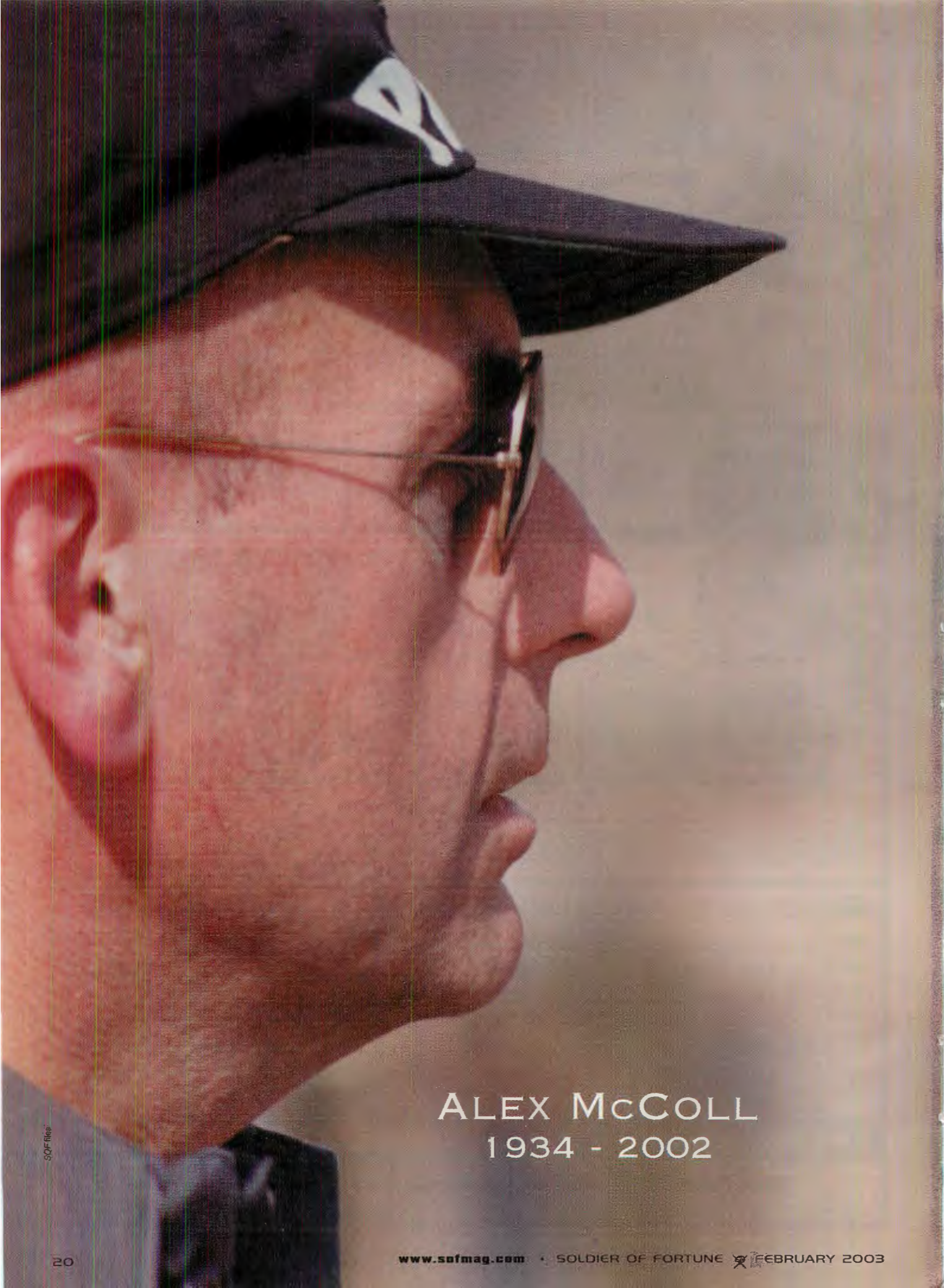
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ALEX McCOLL
1934 - 2002

Soldier Of Fortune Bids Farewell To A Warrior, Scholar — And Friend

COL. ALEXANDER M. S. MCCOLL USAR (RET.)

BY TOM REISINGER, ASSISTANT EDITOR

“Alex was born one or more generations too late. He could well have been a warrior monk in the 13th century cutting down its “legions of evil” and “forces of darkness” with his trusty broadsword. Or, he would have been in his element as an officer in the Bengal Lancers, where integrity and loyalty would have met his high personal standards.”

Lt. Col. Robert K. Brown, USAR (Ret.)
Editor and Publisher
Soldier Of Fortune Magazine

On 23 October 2002, while driving his Jeep Cherokee from Colorado to his longtime home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Alex died near Kearney, Nebraska, in a one-vehicle accident; its cause likely a freak early winter snowstorm, which resulted in obscured visibility, or a lethal stretch of black ice.

Editor/Publisher Bob Brown received the shocking word the following afternoon and immediately called in his staff.

Even now at press time — several weeks later — it's hard to fathom that our longtime friend has departed to, as he would put it, “to that great Holy City,” and that we would no longer enjoy his presence here at the *SOF* offices, his limericks and good humor always a relief even amidst the sometimes chaotic crunch of editorial deadlines.

Last June, Alex's brother, Archibald, a retired JAG officer, passed away from a long illness and following this Alex's demeanor became more serious, and

more reflective, I believe, to what lay ahead for him — and for all of us.

Meeting Up

It was the fall of 1974 when I first met Alex McColl — in La Ceiba, Honduras, of all places — during a hurried-up MEDCAP cobbled together by Bob Brown, Gerry Patrick Hemming, Dr. John Peters and others. Hurricane Fifi had bashed-in a sizable portion of Honduras' coast and inland jungle, cutting-off tiny villages from outside medical assistance.

Thanks to Alex's pull, if you will, with Upjohn Pharmaceuticals, its headquarters then located in Kalamazoo, a hasty, yet extensive, shipment of medicines were assembled and transported (with Alex putting up much of the money) to Miami from where we launched our operation.

Over the many years that he was Director of Special Projects for *Soldier Of Fortune Magazine* and President of Refugee Relief International, Inc., Alex gave unselfishly of his time and personal resources to get various projects moving, whether these involved sending military trainers and medical teams to El Salvador (completely legal), and elsewhere in Central America, or POW search teams to Thailand and Laos in the early '80s, or training personnel to Croatia in the '90s.

After entering Harvard, at age 14, he eventually graduated from Harvard Law School, and then embarked on



SOF files

Alex McColl, in his SOF office.



McColl in the weeds firing his .44 Magnum.

nine active-duty years in the U.S. Army, 30 months of which were spent in South Vietnam.

A Friend To The End

Over the years, Alex (despite back and knee problems and being well into his 60s) persisted in participating in privately-sponsored parachute tours with jumps in Thailand, Israel, Jordan, Cambodia, Guatemala and El Salvador, suffering a near-total backside hematoma in the latter after his steerable chute failed to maneuver and he, as they say,

“crashed and burned.”

Always a man of good cheer and generosity, several SOF staffers were bailed from serious personal financial jams as a check from Alex would suddenly appear on one's desk.

He was a multi-faceted individual who enjoyed the occasional cocktail or glass of fine wine, a semi-bawdy story or two and the company of attractive and very bright female companions, but who was always up early for Sunday church services with his home congregation in Longmont, Colorado.

Staffer Steve Schreiner recalls that “Alex had the lifestyle and moral values of a Victorian warrior priest.”

Hugo Hartenstein, a longtime friend of both Alex and SOF concurs. “Alex was a man of clear convictions steeped in strong religious and ethical beliefs. He was an anomaly in a world of expedient solutions and amoral attitudes. He gave freely to those causes he cherished and was a loyal and giving friend, and was clearly

‘one of the good guys.’ He will be sorely missed.”

His serious conversation and jovial banter shall be missed around our office, but we know he's in his anticipated, and longed-for, Better Place, and is more than likely happily assisting God in keeping His ledgers straight.

Don McLean, our Senior Editor, I think sums up our collective feelings about Alex McColl. “He typified that old image of a gentleman and a scholar. He was indeed both.”

Alex, our departed amigo, the *Soldier Of Fortune* staff — past and present — salutes you. (continues on page 24)

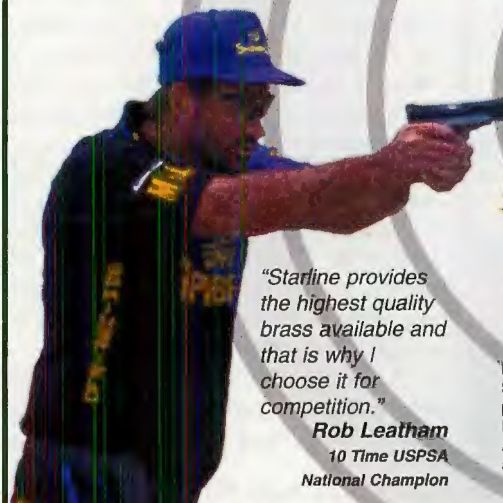
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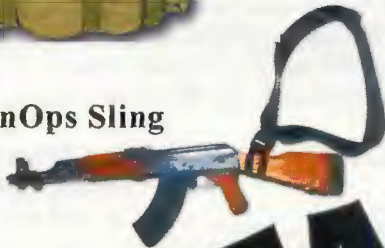
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(Obituary excerpted from the Kalamazoo Gazette:)

Colonel Alexander McCalmont Stone McColl, USAR (Ret.) was born 2 June 1934 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and died 23 October 2002, near Kearney, Nebraska.

He received a B.A. from Harvard University in 1952. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1953, was commissioned in 1955, and served as a special agent in the Counter-Intelligence Corps, stationed in France. He returned to Harvard in 1957 and entered Harvard Law School, where he earned his LL.B. degree in 1960. He practiced law in Michigan and Washington state until 1963 when he returned to active duty with the U.S. Army, remaining until 1970. This active-duty period included 30 months in South Vietnam. From August 1964 to August 1965, on his initial tour, McColl was a Special Security Officer in the J-2 (Intelligence) Section Headquarters, MACV, and later in Studies and Observation Group (MACSOG). ... During his second tour, from April 1967 to November 1968, he served as District Senior Advisor in Dong Xuan District, Phu Yen Province. ... Military awards included the CIB and two Bronze Stars. ... After leaving the active Army, he remained in the U.S. Army Special Forces Reserves until he retired as a full Colonel.

Nearly two decades ago, Alex authored the following



Amman, Jordan, 3 June 1996. Alex chuted-up at RJAF Base for "Wings of Peace II" Jump — Israelis and Jordanians together.

which was to be read or published in the event of his passing:

"We are soldiers, we take risks. When/If one of the risks comes home to roost, that comes with the territory.

It is better to go out, even suddenly, when one is still of an age and physical state to get around and enjoy things, than to become a general burden and die by inches of cancer or heart disease.

To the eye of Faith, death is merely the transition from this darkening veil of tears to the Holy City. One bids farewell to the corruptible and imperfect body of this present life without regret.

Whatever else, do not pay ransom or spend large sums of money to recover a dead body. Let the dead meat rot where it falls. The worthwhile part will have gone forward to a much Better Place.

Do not pay ransom to terrorists or other scum. The worst they can do is send me to a Better Place, and the money is better spent for other things.

My humblest thanks and apologies to all for putting up with me and bearing with my peculiarities. And be of good cheer. He is risen, we are saved, and the Victory is ours."

Col. Alexander M. S. McColl, USAR (Ret.)
Boulder, Colorado
26 June 1985 ✕



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Why Are Bigger, Stronger, Taller And Meaner Multiple-Black Belt Bad Asses Absolutely Terrified Of Challenging This Mild, Middle-Aged (And Undefeated) No-Rules Cage Fighter From Arizona?

It's because his amazing new "simple and vicious" streetfighting system - perfected in illegal (felony) no-rules "pit" fights - allows you to *Instantly* dominate and humiliate even experienced black-belt opponents... no matter how over-matched you are in size, strength or skill. The fight is *over* before he can blink.

Best part: You can learn it almost overnight, even if you're out-of-shape and have no previous fighting skills at all... guaranteed!

(Dateline: Visalia, Ca) My office has been "action central" in the streetfighting world for over 10 years now. I rub elbows with domestic and foreign special forces (SEALS, DELTA, Russian Spetznaz), federal agents (CIA, FBI), big-city SWAT cops, and "black bag" operatives from organizations most civilians will never, ever know about. Any of these guys can tell you how to fight.

But... if you want to learn how to fight very *quickly*... with an astonishing "short set" of viciously-simple secrets that will allow you to step up to *any* fighter, of *any* size and skill level, and *instantly* introduce him to a new world of **pain and fear**... then you **MUST** hear me out.

What's more... if you choose... *I will pay for your entire lesson*, out of my own pocket. What I'm about to show you will *change your life*... and the way you walk the earth, *forever*.

Here's the story: The closest you will ever get to a real streetfight or combat situation is in the **illegal no-rules "cage" and "pit" fights** staged in underground arenas around the world. The only real difference is... in the street or battlefield, you can *run away*. In the cage...

There's No Place To Run!

Cage fights are bloody messes, and the losers often end up **permanently crippled**. In the cage, *all the bullshit ends*. You either win... or you lose. Period.

That's why I was so immediately interested when I heard about **Tom Proctor**. Out of *nowhere*, this unassuming guy is suddenly known as the fighter **no black belt will fight anymore**. He can't get guys to meet him in the cage. He is undefeated (17-0) in both legal cage fights (with the

International Sport Combat Federation), and illegal "pit" fights (put on by private money). In the *heavyweight* division.

But here's the kicker: Tom is 45 years old, and about *twenty pounds shy* of actually being a heavyweight! By no means would you call Tom "big". Every opponent he faced in the cage *outweighed him from 40 to 120 pounds or more* (of solid muscle, mind you)... was *taller* by up to 8 inches... and *all* of them were young studs in their twenties. They were **bigger** (by far), **younger** and in their prime, and **more experienced in no-rules fighting**.

And here comes Tom into the cage - shorter, old as dirt, looking almost **frail** next to the heavyweight monsters he was to fight, showing *none* of the prowess these "real" fighters expected. They licked their chops...

And The Cage Door Slammed Shut!

Results: Tom put them *all* down. **Fast**.

That 284-pound Texan, six foot eight, undefeated in 8 cage fights... *begging for mercy after just 37 seconds*.

That 268-pound Mexican strongman, six-two, the favorite by 100-to-1... barely lasted a minute and a half before *going out cold*.

That 22-0 Shoot-fighter from Canada... *knocked out in under a minute*. And on, and on - the Ju-Jitsu wrestler, the Okinawa-style kickboxer, the Muay Thai experts, the streetfighters, the ex-Spec Op soldiers, the nastiest and biggest and most vicious headhunters on the planet... they *all* went down in record times. Every single one of them.



Tom Proctor may be 20-years older and 40-pounds lighter than any opponent he faces in the pit, but he is an undisputed and undefeated no-rules "cage" fighting champion. How is this possible? Tom finally steps forward and reveals his simple fighting secrets - and they're easier to learn than you can imagine!

Even the professional bouncer from the Baltimore strip club (6'8", 290 lbs.) - a bad mo-fo so *huge* the ambulance guys *couldn't* get the straps around his chest on the stretcher when they hauled him off.

And you know what Tom Proctor won for all his hard work? *Not a single penny*.

He never did it for the money.

He did it just to *prove a simple point*. He just wanted to let the world know there really is a **simple fighting system for average guys**...

And NO ONE Can Beat It!

And Tom didn't stop with his *own* victories. He took a group of guys off the street, most with **ZERO** fighting experience, **NO** skills at all, and **NO** "killer in-

stinct". These yo-yo's were out-of-shape, not muscular, not coordinated, not gifted, not *anything*. In fact, a couple of them were *young women!*

Didn't matter to Tom. In the *shortest time* humanly possible, he used his teaching secrets to "force-feed" his simple, basic fighting skills into this motley group... and then sent them out to the cages for the *first fights of their lives!*

Result, as of Tuesday: A total of 68 no-rules cage bouts by 15 of his fighters. Record: **64 wins by knockout or submission**, 4 loses to decision. (Not a one of his guys has *ever* been knocked out or even hurt – the "decision" losses were actually "draws".)

In just an *amazing short time*, Tom took "lambs" and turned them into **fearless warriors**.

So what does all this have to do with you? Everything.

If Tom Proctor can take average Joes and turn them into vicious fighters who stare down and *knock out* meaner, heavier and more experienced opponents in no-rules cage fights (where there's *nowhere to run*)... just think what his techniques can do for a guy like *you!*

Tom's been *aching* for a chance to show guys like you what he can do for you. It's

"...there really is a simple fighting system for average guys... And NO ONE Can Beat It!"

his mission – to **completely erase ALL the advantages** that big, muscular, intensely-trained assholes have against normal guys. His single-minded goal is to make *every* bully, rapist, robber and thrill-seeking punk think twice before jumping a guy (or a woman) they "think" they can easily take.

He wants *every* bad-ass bad guy to see the inside of a hospital if they get out of line.

It's a program I'm behind 100%. I've sponsored a lot of other fighting systems, but I've **NEVER** seen *anything* like Tom's "forgotten" streetfighting methods. Neither have you – in fact, *no one has*, outside the small group Tom has chosen to teach. The system he's perfected has roots in the mysterious ancient art of **Tao Chi Do...** but even the ancient masters *never had to face attackers twice their size in a cage with no place to hide.*

Right now is when you...

Listen To What Men Who Know Are Saying About Tom Proctor's Fighting Secrets!

"This stuff really works! I defended myself against 3 bikers and got one guy with a Rhino move... I think I broke his nose and some other stuff... The other two backed off!" --Rodney Ratt, Sask Canada

"Tom Proctor is without a doubt the best all around fighter that I have ever seen in my 26 years of studying the fighting arts."
-- Brad Elbricht, Ft. Wayne, IN.

"Thanks Tom! After learning your cage fighting secrets, my confidence has gone through the roof, I no longer walk the streets in fear anymore!" --Allen Wiedlen, Tulare, CA

"If you had one hour to prepare for the fight of your life, Tom Proctor would be the first call that you make."
--Jim Hallford, Venice Beach, CA

Finally Learn To Fight For REAL!

The key to Tom's fighting art is its **simplicity**. There is **no** intense training, no long months of practice required. The few skills you learn (quickly) **easily adapt to any situation, against any kind of fighter.**

This is the **ONLY** set of fighting skills you'll *ever* need to win in hand-to-hand combat with another man. This is life-changing stuff. This will turn dangerous situations into *playtime* for you.

That's why it was so important for me to rush Tom into the studio, and get his "learn it FAST" single fighting lesson on videotape. I consider this video the most important fighting lesson I've ever witnessed... **and I'm betting my own money that you'll agree.**

In just **one short lesson**, Tom will show you:

- How to immediately **pump 400% more raw power** into every blow you deliver! (Tom has taught *78-year old women* to knock out grown men with a single strike – and they've *done it*, while being attacked in their homes at night!)
- How to create a **protective shield** that will **NOT ALLOW** any fighter to come close to striking you *at any time!* (The Muay Thai kickboxers who faced Tom call it "voodoo" defense because they are so amazed they *can't penetrate it...* but it's really just a *simple* secret – *easily* mastered once you know what to do — of **redirecting incoming energy.**)
- How to quickly make a strong opponent weak! (You'll see his "will to fight" rush out of him like a punctured balloon, while he just *exhausts* himself with frustration and rage...

turning him into a nice soft *punching bag* for you, no matter how big and pissed-off he was to start.)

- How to tap the astonishing "**hidden strength**" **inside you** that will *immediately* fill you with the **steel-eyed confidence and energy of a true warrior!** (Works so fast and so effectively, it's like *magic*. Tom himself has used this "**super-human power**" to take a bullet, finish the fight... and still leave the hospital *before the other guy was out of Intensive Care!*)
- And... **how to quickly open up a skilled attacker, knock him down and finish him off in seconds!** (All the options are yours... and he goes down when *you* decide to take him down!)

What's more... what you learn from Tom will "**fuse**" together *seamlessly* with any fighting skills you already have! (Unlike all other martial arts, where you must forget everything you know to learn new styles.)

But look – I don't care *what* your **current skill level** is... or what kind of **shape** you're in. Rookie or experienced fighter... this is a *once-in-a-lifetime opportunity* to learn a **few simple skills that will allow you to take on any fighter, anywhere, under any circumstances.**

And I don't care how *confident* you are with your current skills... once you know *these* secrets, you'll finally have the kind of **fearless nerve** that quiets a room when you walk in. People can *smell* this kind of confidence on you... and they give you a wide berth.

It's like being your own 300-pound bodyguard.

So here's the deal: Just call my office

at 1-800-899-8153, Dept. CF-47 and tell whoever answers you want "The Lost Art Fighting Video". You can use your credit card... or, if you prefer to pay by check or money order, just fill out the "Priority Order Form" and mail it to TRS. Either way, your video package will be *rush-shipped* to you by return mail.

The price for this amazing fighting video is just \$69... *but you don't risk a penny*. It comes with an **unconditional 3-month Money Back Guarantee of Satisfaction** – if you aren't 100% convinced this video will quickly give you the fighting skills you want... for any reason or for *no reason at all*... simply send the video back (in any condition), and you will receive an **immediate and prompt refund**... *no questions asked*. That means – if you so choose – you'll have seen all the secrets Tom has to offer... absolutely for *free*. And that comes out of my own pocket.

Why am I doing this? It's a *serious financial risk* for me... and if I wasn't utterly confident in what we have here, I could easily go bankrupt overnight.

But I'm not concerned at all. You know why? Because, like I said, I've seen it all... *every fighter of any worth in the world* has been in touch with my office, and I've backed dozens of fighters who could tear the head off Godzilla.

Yet... I've **NEVER** seen *anything like this*. I love having a "voodoo shield" (as the Muay Thai kickboxers called it) that protects me from being hit even by a trained boxer or black belt... and I *especially* love knowing the secrets of **instantly demolishing bigger opponents**, no matter how overmatched I am "on paper".

I'm betting – *with my own money* – that you're going to be so amazed at what you learn... that sending the video back will be the *last thing* on your mind. Anyone who is *serious about learning to fight*... *really fight, and win every time*... will understand why Tom's new "forgotten" system is causing such excitement.

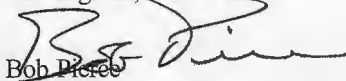
But you must call today! My partners have put an absolute time limit on how long I can keep this offer on the table.

So, in **just 11 days**, this incredible opportunity goes away! I simply cannot financially expose my company any longer than that. But it's plenty of time for anyone who's *serious* about fighting, like you.

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better deal anywhere in the fighting world.

Best regards,


Bob Proctor

President, TRS Direct

P.S. One more thing – *I almost forgot!* I will also rush you a **Free Special Report** by Tom Proctor called "Advance Warning!" In this free report, you'll discover *everything* Tom learned about "reading" an opponent in a glance – so you'll know *before he makes a move* if he's a boxer... a grappler... a kickboxer... or a karate fighter. This kind of "early warning system" gives you a **HUGE** advantage in a toe-to-toe no-rules fight, because you'll know *exactly* how he's going to come at you, while he won't have a clue

what you're going to do!

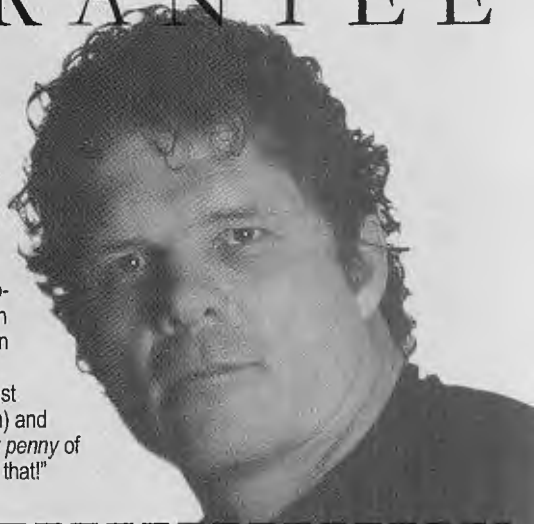
Professional fighters have privately paid Tom *hundreds of dollars* for this information... and we were going to package it separately and sell it for \$99 all by itself... but I changed my mind. I want you to have the **entire arsenal of fighting skills** Tom offers, *right away*. So I'm including this **Special Report**, absolutely *free*, when you order his video. And it's yours to **KEEP**, too, even if you later decide to return the video for a refund. Consider it my gift to you, just for trusting me on this amazing new fighting system.

P.P.S. Remember, *you only have 11 days to call!* Do it now, while this letter is still hot in your hands. If you're serious about learning to fight to win, you're going to love Tom's fast-learn system!

Tom Proctor's Personal GUARANTEE

"I'm a guy of all action and little talk... and, (as an undefeated NHB fighter, kick boxer, and Muay Thai fighter who *regularly* defeats opponents at least 20 years younger and 40 pounds heavier than myself), when I finally *do* talk about the secrets of self-defense – people listen.

I am so *confident* that you will find this two-video package the *most* simple, easy-to-learn and highly effective material you've ever seen that I'm making it totally **risk free to you!** If you're not 100% satisfied (for *any* reason), just send the tapes back to TRS (in any condition) and I'll personally make sure you're rushed *every penny* of your purchase price. You've got my word on that!"
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the green gates of hell



With Mission Planners Like These, Why Sweat The NVA?

BY DANA DRENKOWSKI

I rode a steel steed through the Gates of Hell on 6 September 1972. They were emerald green, the color of a canyon in North Vietnam, near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and my steed was a green and brown F4 Phantom with shark's eyes and garish snarling shark's teeth painted under the nose.

It was my second tour in the late great Southeast Asia War Games, as we called the Vietnam War. We were soon to wear T-shirts with "Survivor, S.E. Asia War Games — 2nd Place" imprinted on them, but that came later. I was stationed at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base, near Udorn Thani, also known as the town of Udorn, in Northeastern Thailand.

I flew B-52s in the war a year earlier, but the heavy bomb runs in BUFFs (Big Ugly Fat F*****s) seemed like peacetime training missions compared to the war the fighter jocks were fighting. That would soon change with the Linebacker II raids over Hanoi during Christmas of that same year.

North Vietnam's Easter Offensive of April-May 1972 had ground to a halt in South Vietnam, due in large part to both the hard fighting of the American aviation forces from the Air Force, Marines, and Navy, but also due to some hard stands taken by crack South Vietnamese ground soldiers in key locations. Up to 20 North Vietnamese regular army divisions were left in-place in South Vietnam, with their integral armor, artillery, and substantial anti-air firepower still intact. American ground troops played a small role in the stand, with only two brigades left as part of the

Vietnamization effort which turned over the ground role to South Vietnam while U.S. troops were pulled out.

Now we were fighting back with airpower in Operation Linebacker, destroying transportation and military facilities in North Vietnam, while still supporting Vietnamese and American Army "troops in contact" throughout Laos, Cambodia and the two Vietnams.

It was my 16th mission in my F4 combat tour. I would end up with more than 10 times that after 13 months of fighting, many of those "Up North" around Hanoi, fighting against the best the Russian anti-air forces had to throw up against us. Now, former Russian military personnel gather together for reunions in Moscow to publicize and brag about their scores against American airpower during that war — and to mourn the passing of so many of their comrades at our hands.

At the time, American news media discounted such stories as American military propaganda, but we fighter pilots knew the caliber of the opposition — and we were beating them at their own game, on their turf, every day we went up against them. But it cost us a lot — nearly half my first squadron's Phantoms were shot down in the space of a few weeks, lost with their crews either dead, missing or captured. I moved on to a squadron with more airplanes, the 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron, also known as the "Panther Pack".

I liked flying "Old Double-Ugly," as the unattractive Phantom was called. She looked like she never got out of the McDonnell Douglas hangar before the door was slammed shut, leaving her with a drooped snoot, hunched back behind the cockpit, turned-up wingtips, turned-down tail feathers,



angled-up back end, and engines angled downward at 12 degrees. She looked like she was designed by a committee. Actually, she was, after initial flight tests revealed the need for changes to correct problems.

But like men who loved and married unattractive mates, we were especially devoted to our Phantom war-horses. She was indeed as homely as a mud fence, but to those who fought in her, she was the most beautiful warbird in the world. And certainly, she was the most capable. We felt privileged to fly her in combat, let alone get paid the princely sum of about a thousand dollars a month for the thrill.

Special Mission, Great Risk

Late the evening of 5 September 1972, I saw my name on a schedule posted at the Officer's Club at Udorn. I was to be Number Three of a three-ship formation taking off at "O-dark-thirty" the next morning. We could guess the type of mission based on the number of planes in each formation. Five-ship formations meant a trip to the Red River Valley — Hanoi, aka "Downtown," where the odds of being shot down were excessively high. The basic formation for air-to-air and protection against all kinds of sophisticated anti-air weapons "Downtown" was the four-ship formation. If an F4 flight had fewer than four ships in its formation before entering the combat zone, it was to return. Thus, every four-ship flight to the Hanoi/Red River Valley was sent out with a spare. By the time aerial refueling was completed over Laos, near the North Vietnamese border, any malfunctions would be discovered (in theory, at least) and the fifth ship would insert itself into the formation to replace a broken bird, or it would return home if all others were in good shape.

The list of crews for a five-ship formation thus meant a mission over Hanoi. There would be dozens of five-ship crews listed for a Hanoi mission, as the "packages" of fight-

ers, fighter bombers, Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) planes, and rescue-standbys created a huge gaggle of warbirds for such missions.

Two-ship formations were for safer, routine air-to-mud bombing missions in support of troops in South Vietnam and, to some extent, in Laos. Three-ship formations always meant special missions in which the risk was great, but where air-to-air engagements were not expected — like certain runs down the Ho Chi Minh Trail (better to call that paved road with semi-tractor trailers a "highway" where we fought our battles). A three-ship formation always meant a fight, but without the prestige and glory of a run over Hanoi.

The briefing was at 0400 hours. Gary Horlbeck was flight lead, with Danny McCoppin in his back seat as Weapons Systems Officer (aka "WSO" or "GIB" — Guy In the Back). Max Morris was in "Phantom #2," with Bill McBroom as his GIB. I, still a new guy in the fighter war, was going to fly #3, with Terry Gower as my WSO. I'd flown wing for Gary up North already, and was pleased to do so again. He was a good flight lead. All the guys in that mission were highly experienced except me, the new kid on the block. My only claim to fame to date was that I was the idiot who launched himself into the cage of our mascot, a big black leopard named Eldridge, after the original Black Panther of that name in the U.S. Eldridge — the leopard — became my big cuddly kitty after a few disputes involving blood — mine. Perhaps they thought I was stupid enough to go on such missions so early in my career, so that was why I was on the mission list for what should have called for much more experienced personnel.

In fact, my first mission with this unit, which was to be a milk run in support of troops in South Vietnam, turned out to be a hot mission up North in response to an emer-

agency in which the status of new/old personnel could not be taken into account before retasking our flight up there. I performed well enough, which may be another reason why I found myself on missions requiring more experience.

Bill McBroom was a highly competent GIB, and he and I would share a couple of hero medals for a lonely mission over Hanoi one or two nights before Christmas Eve later that year, when we were to get the snot scared out of us by up to 30 SAMS. They called that series of combat missions Linebacker II. But that was three months away.

We were not surprised to discover in the briefing that September morning that we were going to a tributary valley leading to the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam, a few miles north of the DMZ. Approximately one brigade of troops was in the valley, moving toward Laos to go around McNamara's vaunted \$5 billion electronic line at the DMZ. I guess McNamara didn't hear about the French Maginot Line, before WWII, where the Germans did the same thing: went around it in the neighboring country. It was easy to miss that little point in history, as it only determined the outcome of World War II for the next five years. The units of the brigaded force in that little valley were on their way to reinforce units in South Vietnam, or were going to provide additional security on the Trail. They were fully armed with the usual panoply of anti-air weapons. Additionally, the local trail guard units had heavy anti-air weaponry ready for errant Phantoms and other noxious flies.

What was a surprise was the ordnance we were to carry. We weren't carrying heavy iron with 3-foot-long fuse extenders to make the 500- or 750-lb. bombs explode above ground (pleasantly called "daisy cutters"), nor were we carrying the wonderful pilot's equivalent of a shotgun load called CBU 58s, which released hundreds of grapefruit-sized bomblets over areas some 800-1,000 feet in diameter, wiping out every living thing in that circle. No, our load was CBU 42, also known as "Wampum." CBU 42 pods under the wings scattered hundreds of little plastic minelets, known as "toe-poppers," designed to go off when stepped on. How many survived the delivery was unknown, but because they could easily be swept up with push-brooms from high-speed trails and paved roads, they were only used in last-second drops on enemy troops within dozens of feet of downed pilots or

SpecOps troops fighting while the helicopter was in the area for pickup. The mines would slow running troops down. But they were next to useless against enemy troops with time to push those brooms or with bulldozers — which is what was there in that little valley.

"God Damn! Are You Trying To Get Us All Killed?"

The mines had to be laid down — yes, "laid down" — at relatively slow speeds (about 350 knots), from planes flying straight and level at 400 feet above the ground. For that reason alone Wampum should never be used for delivery where concentrated anti-air firepower is available. Even a "lay-down" ordnance like napalm could be delivered from slight dive angles which protected the aircraft, but not Wampum.

We were ordered to deliver the Wampum over a small crossroad far up the valley, hoping to slow the brigade down in its movement.

In short, we were to be in the open, in broad daylight, with no additional support to put down the anti-air artillery we were sure to meet.

"God damn!" Gary yelled at the briefer. "Are you trying to get us all killed? It's like hanging a 'shoot me first' sign on each plane!"

"Well, ahem, uh, we have to get rid of the Wampum and we have this target, you see ..." the targeting briefer began.

We got the message. It had happened with other ordnance. Like old milk, we had certain "use by" dates or the ordnance would "expire" — it did not self-destruct, it just wasn't supposed to be used after that date because some wienie behind the lines marked it with that date. Yes, Virginia, a lot of ordnance has an expiration date, and sometimes, just to get rid of it, the "powers that be" find targets for it, whether appropriate or not. Sort of like dumping the old milk. Instead of dumping it down the sink, someone always has the bright idea to have fighter jocks dump it somewhere in enemy country — and call it a combat mission.

Kind of a garbage delivery system in reverse — F4 *dump trucks* would deliver the garbage to you, scattering it all over your neighborhood, and you were expected to sweep it up and dispose of it yourself (or use its explosives for your own land mines). It gave the KP-duty boys in the North Viet divisions something extra to do, with the added excitement of seeing pieces of their push-brooms get blown-off. But you had the added thrill of getting to shoot for free at the dump-truck drivers who were going to "hang all it out" for you at altitudes and airspeeds where even an AK could bring down

An F-4E Phantom II aircraft of the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing launches an AGM-65 Maverick missile.





Hulton Getty photo archive

an F4. Not a bad deal all around, except for the F4 dump-truck drivers. We didn't have as good a union as the Teamsters, who would have never taken the job.

"Come on, this is bullshit!" Gary said again to the intel officer briefing us. "How do you sleep with yourself at night?"

"I don't, I sleep with my hootch maid. Unlike fighter pilots who love themselves so much that they can only sleep alone. Or GIBs, who nobody likes, who have to sleep with each other".

Damn! He must have laid awake thinking that one up. And we didn't have a good response, either. We must have been too worried about the mission.

Not having a good rejoinder, Gary reviewed the maps and target. In order to reach it, we would have to enter the valley from the Gulf of Tonkin, flying over rice paddies for a short distance to approach the valley mouth, then fly up the length of the valley, which ran approximately east to west, under the ridgelines for a few miles as it narrowed from ocean side to the mountains, where the road linked to the infamous Trail. The valley was a few miles wide at the opening and narrowed to a few hundred yards wide at the target crossroads. We couldn't attack from the upper end of the tight valley, diving into it and leveling-out because there wasn't room to do that without impacting the ground or the valley walls. Remember, that damned stuff had to be delivered straight and level, 400 feet and 350 knots — the "shoot me first" sign was optional.

We planned it so that we would come out of the East at low altitude at dawn. The sun would be at our backs, low on the horizon. The gunners would have a harder time aiming into the sun.

Does that sound familiar? All the tricks of war are already known, they are just updated by each generation of warriors to fit the new equipment. But ever since men fought with missile weapons like spears and arrows, the smart ones maneuvered to have the sun at their backs to give themselves an added edge.

The plan included flying due east from our base in Thailand over Laos, then over a safe area of North Vietnam at about 28,000 feet until we hit the Gulf of Thailand, "owned" by the United States Navy. We would then let down while

Shadow of reconnaissance aircraft above a bombed out bridge in North Vietnam.

turning east, back toward the mainland of North Vietnam, leveling out at low-altitude and high-speed to begin our run.

We would have to fly from the Gulf in the east, over about 10 miles of rice paddies, until we hit the beginnings of the mountain ridges that ran parallel to the coast, approximately north and south. These ridges were intersected by rivers and their canyons going west to east, which was one of the ones we had to fly up to find and hit our target. It looked like we were going to fly about 20 miles or more at very low-altitude. And we knew most of those canyons were routes to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and were thus heavily defended with anti-aircraft guns and experienced gunners.

It looked like it would be ... "interesting," as McBroom put it. He was a paragon of understatement.

We went to the Personal Equipment Room to suit up for battle. Fighter pilots see themselves as knights of old, and not just for the fact that we are usually at the pointy end of things. We fight alone or in very small groups, and deliver a result far out of proportion to our numbers, all while riding great armed and armored war steeds. And our greatest dream is to meet our opposite number, one-on-one, to duel to the death, with superior skill, luck, and courage winning the day. All non-flying opponents are like the peons with puny weapons — we can and do kill far more of them than they of us. But like the yeomen of yore, even simple bows and crossbows could bring down an armored knight. Little AKs could drop an F4 when it flew too low, slow, and close. And we were about to do just that.

Putting on the 65-70 lbs. of equipment — G-suit, survival vest, web harness (for seat and parachute attachments), weapons (I carried a 9mm Browning Hi Power, a .38 Combat Masterpiece, and a two shot derringer — the last in a small cigarette pocket — and sometimes added a Walther PPK in .380ACP), oxygen mask, emergency radios, extra water bottles, and maps, fuel tabs, compass, knives — was like suiting-

up with armor in our visions of knighthood. We walked like old men to our magnificent steeds, needing help getting in the planes and strapping in.

Preflight was normal but for the different pre-arm checks for the Wampum dispenser pods, each filling an entire underwing assembly. The Wampum pods were streamlined, so that we would not have the usual drag associated with heavy iron bombs. They were also lighter, giving us more power available for other things and needs.

I experienced the usual thrill as the start up began, feeling the low grumble as my war-horse's engines woke up, the mild vibration the only sign that the toughest war horse in the world was about to take me into battle one more time.

Take off was normal as I transitioned from a ground-pounder into the mind of the F4; like most good pilots, I no longer thought in terms of going from point A to B by turning the airplane so many degrees and climbing or diving so many feet to get there. No, I just thought I had to be at B and the plane went there as I thought about it. Now, we might call it the *Zen of Flying*. That ability to be a true pilot saved my bacon on many missions, and would do so today, 6 September 1972.

Our little three-ship formation dodged a few monsoon thunderheads on the way due east to North Vietnam from Thailand, crossing over the verdant green mountains and craggy gray limestone outcroppings of Laos on the way.

We crossed over the southern portion of North Vietnam as planned and headed for the Gulf of Tonkin to do our let-down to fighting altitude. Things were normal as we turned to a heading of 180 degrees over the Gulf, descending as we did so from 20,000 feet to our delivery altitude of 400 feet. I went through the descent checklist, making sure the air conditioning was turned full hot and the blowers on max. It was hotter than hell going down, but in that humid climate, the sudden change in altitude brought a climate change that our air conditioning couldn't keep up with. We had to pre-warm up the cockpit or the F4's nasty habit of condensation fogging, then frosting over the inside of our cockpit canopies would occur, making us fly blind at low-altitude. Once warmed for a minute or two, we could turn it back to cool and not worry about it. But it still failed now and again. Just another quirk of the Phantom.

As I lowered the nose, my Phantom quickly picked up speed like a war-horse smelling the fight to come. I had to rein it in with reduced throttle and speed brakes until we leveled out at less than 100 feet. We would go in low and fast, then (according to the theory) slow to 350 knots just before we reached the target. Yeah, sure.

We turned to head due west, toward the land we had been paralleling.

I could see the valley ahead, inland. I dropped my clear visor from the top of my helmet to cover my face, like the metal protective visor of the knight of yore. It might keep fragments from blinding me if the canopy was blown-out. I was going through the immediate pre-flight rituals. I turned my oxygen-control system from "ambient air" to "100%" and then to "pressure." Now pure, dry oxygen was being literally forced into my lungs, to aid me in breathing in the event I

was shot and needed help getting air into my lungs. I would always wake up at night with earaches, as the pure oxygen was absorbed during the mission into the inner ear, coming out at night to fill the ear with pressure. But the peace of mind was worth the nighttime pain. As soon as I started the pressurized oxygen, the adrenaline began flowing. Things started happening in slow motion, although we were flying at the Mach, transonic.

Gary told us earlier in briefing to go down "in echelon," with the two wing men flying slightly behind him off one wing. If you take your hand, close the fingers tightly together, and fold the index finger out of the way, you have a three-ship-echelon formation.

"Go fighting trail, NOW!"

Gary ordered as we started leveling-off over the Gulf less than a mile offshore. We two wingmen each dropped back and out a few hundred feet, making it hard to get more than one of us with a shot.

We crossed the shoreline and headed inland, passing over surprised farmers holding hoes or rakes in their rice paddies. We were smoking. The let-down had increased our airspeed and the low drag of the pods gave little resistance. We must have crossed the shoreline at Mach 1. I was breathing hard, both from the pressure oxygen and from the excitement. I could hear Terry over the hot intercom in my back seat, also breathing hard.

I could see well-kept military roads leading to our canyon, now looming so green in the near distance. The sides of the ridgeline making up our canyon slid up slowly, gently from the rice paddy floor at first, then became steeper and harsher further inland. Max slid about 600 feet behind lead and slightly offset, while I dropped back behind him, offset still further from Gary's track. Max in #2 and I in #3 flew a kind of three dimensional cone behind Gary, now jinking and sliding back and forth, to disrupt tracking solutions by crew-served Anti Aircraft ("AAA") weapons as well as the individual soldiers shooting their AKs and RPDs straight up. As we weaved, we kept "out of phase" with each other, so we wouldn't run into bullets and shells meant for the guy ahead.



Viet Cong soldiers open up at American aircraft during an air raid on their village.

Hulton Getty photo archive

It wasn't pretty flying, but it was effective.

Over the rice paddies, there was no shooting.

That didn't last long.

As we entered the miles-wide canyon, we could see North Vietnamese regulars everywhere, most of them sitting around campfires near foxholes and bunkers, with crew-served weapons a few feet away. We were bringing hell to breakfast much to the surprise of the inhabitants. And you know how people feel about surprise guests. That morning, in North Vietnam, they grabbed for their guns.

"BURNER, NOW!" Gary shouted, his voice pitched higher from adrenaline and pure oxygen. He didn't need to say it. Both of us wingmen saw his tail pipes widen to full open, signaling the onset of afterburner as raw jet fuel was dumped into the exhaust, blowing the jet forward from the barely controlled continuous explosion. And even if we didn't see it, the sight of his exhaust flames going from yellow-orange to light

blue, like a Bunsen burner flame, was the ultimate signal that Lead was going full bore. We didn't need an invitation to light up and get the hell down the road, ASAP.

We came down fast, and were already transonic before we hit the burners — and now we were supersonic, or faster than the "speed of heat" as we called it.

Nobody told the NVA that we were coming — you could tell by the surprised looks on their faces as we smoked over them. We saw soldiers by the score, here, there, and everywhere, some dropping their morning tea and rice, some standing in wide-eyed shock. Some were already grabbing for rifles or heading for the nearby crew-served weapons.

But by the time each group of those first soldiers reacted, we were gone, coming up on the next group. I could imagine the first sergeant of each squad we flew over, choking on his rice, swearing like sergeants everywhere when the stuff hits the fan. And with the valley so long and narrow, we flew over each squad of that regiment or brigade, one by one as we went down the valley. But there were more than just a regiment.

Judging by the numbers, it was beginning to look like we were going to fly through a whole division — up to 14,000 men — and the gun pits were all around. Now, I could see muzzle flashes here and there.

"Two's going up! Two's aborting! IFR, IFR!" [instrument flight rules; fly on instruments.]

I heard the call on the radio just in time to look out for Max and Bill in Two as it pulled steeply up, in a hard vertical climb, out of range of most of the small-caliber stuff within seconds. I could see his canopy clearly. It was completely fogged over. He was climbing out on instruments only, but had to get up quickly, before he ran into the valley walls, the ground or one of us. His air conditioner obviously failed. It happened that quickly — within a split second, he lost all outside vision as the canopy was covered from the inside with condensation. Max was pulling up and out of the fight.

"Three's clear!" I yelled back, both to reassure Max and to let Lead know Max didn't take us both out in a mid-air collision.

"You're okay, Two," Gary said, more calmly than me. "Wings level, looks like a 70-degree climb angle." With that information, Gary gave Max the confirmation he needed to cross-check his pitch and bank instruments. Max probably had no time to insure his gyros hadn't precessed-in our hard

jinking around at low altitudes and high speed, when he fogged over and had to yank back on the stick to get out of trouble. He was flying completely blind.

Max started leveling-off, doing a slow aileron roll to impress us with his instrument flying skills. He probably was happy to have an excuse to get out anyway, and the roll may have been his expression of exuberance. This was already a hot mission, and we hadn't really started.

"Sorry guys. Good luck." I recognized the quiet voice of Bill McBroom, Max's backseater, on the radio. He almost sounded sincere, as if he were really sorry he couldn't stay and get shot. Sure, we believed him.

Four pairs of envious eyeballs watched Max's departure from the fun.

But we couldn't watch long. Within seconds after the first call, we were watching out for ourselves. We were now in the valley, going like bats out of hell. I saw a strange phenom-

enon: the further through the valley we raced, the closer to the crew-served weapons the NVA got before we overflew them. They couldn't hear us coming. The guys behind us must have been radioing frantically ahead.

At first, we flew over them while they were having their rice and tea. By the time we flew a mile or so beyond the last group, the tea and rice were scattered for the next group as the NVA troops grabbed their rifles or went for the AAA gun pits. Yet another half-mile and the new group was already firing the rifles as we appeared, or they were furiously cranking the crew-served automatic guns around, but not anywhere near our direction yet.

The guns were manually operated 14.5mm, 23mm, 37mm and 57mm automatic cannons. Some may have been radar-guided and computer-controlled, but there was no time to run up the electronics. They were just grabbing and cranking 'em manually.

The guns weren't on us as we zipped by — at first. But the further up the valley, the more ready they were. This was getting downright hazardous to my health! Pretty soon, the next groups would be pulling the triggers with guns facing the right direction before we appeared, which would solve their tracking problems and take care of my retirement worries all at once.

"Hang on, it's time to squeeze down," Gary said on the radio, the tension clear in his voice.

It was obvious we could not fly through the valley at 400 feet like two fat ducks in trail over a thousand duck blinds with eager hunters getting ready for their free shots.

Gary went down to 25-75 feet off the deck, rising up and down to avoid the rolling valley floor, still jinking hard left and right. I didn't tell him, but I was way ahead of him on that move, having descended to the valley floor as soon as I realized the gunners were getting to their big guns on time. Momma didn't raise me to die at 400 feet and 350 knots!

Tracers were beginning to fill up the skies as we shot down the valley. I never saw so many tracers concentrated in the sky before. I found myself wishing for full loads of those miraculous CBU-58s — the bombs that released hundreds of grapefruit sized weaponry each loaded with explosives and hundreds of ball bearings, the shell casings lined with flammable phosphorus — the latter to get their attention after the ball-bearings penetrated their tender flesh. At that point, I

**erry yelled "go left!"
in the intercom and
i yanked the phantom
back in time to see
another line of
tracers rip the air
where we would
have been.**

really didn't like those guys!

Now the AAA barrels were starting to face us as we skidded around bends in the valley or leapt over small hillocks and rises in the valley floor at the speed of heat. The canyon was bright green, with heavy grass and low brush — but no trees to block AAA gunfire zones for us. It was made for gunners — no obstructions when they swung those barrels. The rounds were coming up and at us now. The warnings were reaching the units in time — and we were in for it.

Going Down

I saw a gun spitting hot shells directly at us from the right, and jinked inside the line of tracers.

Terry yelled "Go left!" in the intercom and I yanked the Phantom back in time to see another line of tracers rip the air where we would have been.

"Left!"

"Right!"

"Up!"

"Up fast!"

"Left! Left harder!"

I was jinking and banking to avoid all the tracers I was seeing, then yanking-and-banking almost simultaneously in response to what Terry was seeing.

Terry's orders came fast and furious.

"Going down!" I yelled, warning him in case he thought I was hit and going into the ground. He would have split seconds to jerk his ejection seat handle before the plane hit the ground. He might be able to save himself, but the .75-second delay between his ejection seat and mine being shot out of the plane usually meant the difference between death for the frontseater and life for the backseater.

Terry did most of the talking. I didn't have much to tell him — I was dodging what I saw and relying on him to look where I wasn't. It was unfair — his hand wasn't on the stick, saving his life, so he had to rely on me to get us away from our one-way ticket to hell in a hot rocket.

I was sweating up a storm, the Gs forcing the droplets to spurt from my forehead to splatter on the visor an inch from my face.

"No way we'll drop at 400 feet!" I snapped to Terry. "They'll kill us!"

"Left! Left!" He shouted, then, "Who cares? Just get it there! It's expired anyway!"

Couldn't argue with his logic.

Red and black flower-like blossoms erupted around Gary's wildly gyrating Phantom. I made sure my jinks didn't take me behind him for longer than the split second it took to cross behind him to the other side. Those blossoms were the heavy-caliber AAA guns. Guns aimed directly at lead would hit me, due to the lead needed to shoot us down — they had



Agence France Presse

United States Air Force Captain Wilmer N. Grubb is given first aid while being guarded by his captors in North Vietnam on January 1966.

to aim far in front of a fast-moving plane for the rounds to arrive where we would be, not where we were. The orange blossoms held hundreds of shrapnel shreds.

They were shooting everything! I could see guys in the pits, firing AKs, pistols, RPDs, heavy machine guns — I could see shell casings streaming out of the guns — and the deadly AAA cannons, spewing out their strings of flaming golf balls. I even saw guys dropping mortar shells down the tubes as we passed by. RPG rounds floated futilely behind us. But nearly all, in their haste or surprise, were aiming directly at me — the bullets and shells would pass behind me. No experienced bird hunters in this bunch! But the crap fired directly at Lead was coming my way!

I would have hated to have been on the valley floor — the noise must have been awesome, with two F4s in full-afterburner and every gun a brigade had firing wildly in the air in a narrow valley. We were dragons with angry snarling shark's

mouths, in multiple hues of green, brown and black, spewing fire from our tail cones, going so fast we weren't heard until we passed — but what a noise after we passed! Earplugs wouldn't save most people's hearing at those decibels. The noise and shock waves from our speed, plus their own heavy guns, must have blown a few ear drums. And no one was wearing earplugs. The rounds were sometimes impacting around or in gun pits on opposite sides of the valley. The NVA brigade must have taken a quite a few "friendly fire" casualties that day.

The canyon was narrow now, with hardly any room to jink sideways. We were being funneled directly over the guns — and NVA soldiers were banging away like they were paid by the bullet. I could hear Terry grunting and panting over the intercom as I snapped the plane back and forth, the Gs affecting him.

The target was just ahead. Lead rolled his wings level, so that his Wampum wouldn't scatter up the canyon walls — or worse yet, jam in the downward releasing dispenser racks.

Thousands of rifles were firing at us from a few hundred feet away as we drove down Hell's Gate. Muzzle flashes looked like flashbulbs going off from everywhere we could see.

I focused on the target, my thumb suspended in air over the red "pickle button" on the stick grip. I lost track of time and the noise of gunfire around me as everything became quiet in my head. All that mattered now was the target.

"Steady, steady," I told myself. I was vaguely aware of the

Continued on page 73

Soldier of Fortune

For the past year, we have dedicated these pages to covering the global war on terrorism, with in-depth coverage, first-hand accounts and insightful editorials.

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BY DR. MARTIN BRASS

AMERICA AT WAR

AL-QAEDA INTERNET MESSAGE:

"By attempting to strike a U.S. plane in Saudi Arabia and by bombing a Jewish synagogue in Tunisia, destroying two ships in Yemen, attacking the Fialka base in Kuwait, and bombing nightclubs and warehouses in Indonesia, al-Qaeda has shown it has no qualms about attacking inside Arab and Islamic lands."

UNITED STATES AND ALLIES: Bin Laden believed alive, harbored with his deputy, Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri by Pushtan tribesmen on the border between Afghanistan and the Pakistani tribal areas of North and South Waziristan. *Al Jazeera* news station recorded threats to U.S. allies, allegedly by al-Zawahiri: "... we are prepared with the help of Allah to inject further doses." "What do your governments (Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Australia) want by allying themselves with the criminal gang in the White house against Muslims?" Interpol Warns: Al-Qaeda operatives are warming up for bigger spectacles; expect simultaneous attacks in multiple countries.

PHILIPPINES: U.S. Green Beret killed by motorcycle bomb outside of karaoke bar frequented by GIs. Abu Sayyaf Group, tied to bin Laden, terrorized country with series of bombs after anniversary of 9-11, ripping apart shopping centers, bars, and Westerner hangouts, killing nine and wounding hundreds. Captured Abdulmukim Edris, head of Abu Sayyaf explosive teams, who planned to bomb the U.S. Embassy, Manila Stock Exchange and other targets and to use cellular phones to detonate ammonium-nitrate bombs.

SINGAPORE: Videotape found in rubble of an al-Qaeda leader's home in Afghanistan pinpointed Singapore targets, including U.S. warships U.S. embassy and a subway station used by U.S. military personnel.

INDONESIA: Minivan packed with C4 and ammonium nitrate blew up disco in Bali; 190 dead; 300 injured. Abu Bakar Bashir and Hambali, who trained two of the 9-11 Pentagon suicide bombers, suspect in bombing, and in church bombings and plot to assassinate President Megawati. Megawati's hands tied in country of 220 million, 90% muslim. Jemmah Islamiya (JI), tied to al-Qaeda, with goal of Islamic state to include Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines with hubs (mantiqis) in all four countries. JI suspect in U.S.S. *Cole* bombing, plot to blow up U.S. Embassy in Singapore.

COLOMBIA: The FARC has resorted to kidnapping, extortion of civilians, blowing up electrical towers and reservoirs, public buildings, airports and assassination of government officials. U.S. "advisers" training 4,000 Colombian troops to protect a 500-mile U.S. private-operated oil pipeline, were declared as military targets. Newly elected President Alvaro Uribe is "rehabilitating" the left-wing FARC and ELN guerrilla strongholds. Uribe, who denounced former President Pastrana's foiled peace tactics, ordered arbitrary searches, interceptions of electronic communications, nationalization of private property and curfews.

CANADA: "With perhaps the single exception of the United States, there are more international terrorist groups active here (Canada) than any other country in the world," CSIS Director Ward Elcock was quoted as saying. "Singing Like Birds" Captured terrorists revealing vital information to U.S. intelligence include: Mohamed Mansour Jabarah, in Singapore, planning 9-11 and arrested in Oman, warned U.S. agents of plot to bomb Western nightclubs in Southeast Asia, but to no avail; Omar Khadr, accused of killing a U.S. soldier, is spilling his guts; Ahmed Ressay, who trained at Osama's camps in Afghanistan and tried to blow up LAX, is betraying his fellow Islamic kamikazis.

PAKISTAN: President Musharraf is powerless in tribal regions where al-Qaeda is regrouping. The border guard Pakistani Frontier Corps is infiltrated with al-Qaeda operatives. Tips from locals and intelligence intercepts exposed al-Qaeda operatives hidden in Karachi. Key 11 Sept player Ramzi Bin al-Shibh captured.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti citizens attack 150 Marines of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit in training exercises dubbed "Eager Mace." One Marine killed, one wounded.

TUNISIA: Al-Qaeda blows up ancient synagogue, killing 19, mostly foreigners.

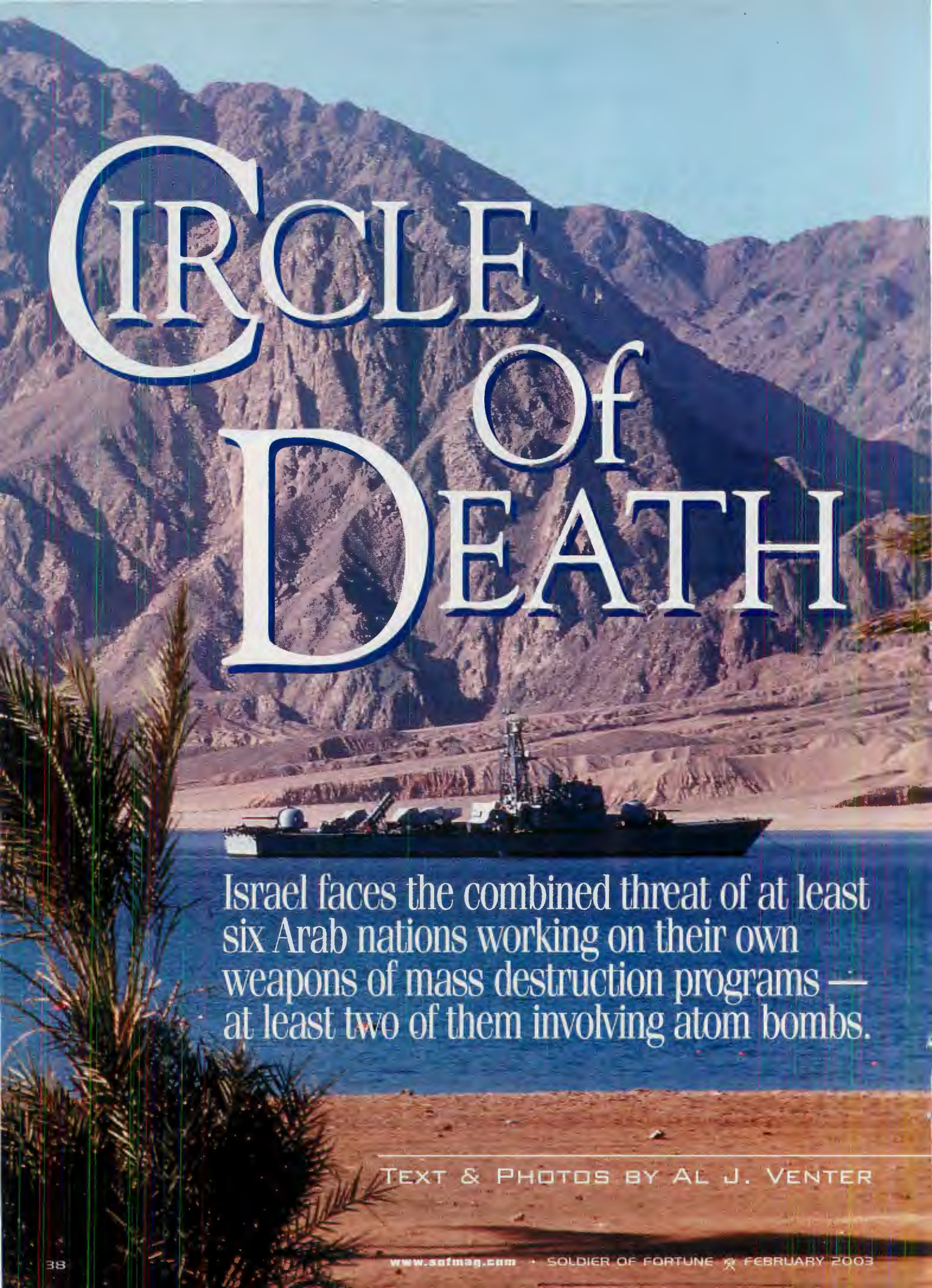
JORDAN: U.S. Diplomat Laurence Foley assassinated outside his home in Jordan.

AFGHANISTAN: A battalion of 520 paras dropped on Afghan — Pakistan border confiscated caches of RPG rounds and ammunition. Al-Qaeda members had fled to Pakistan. Kabul: Airstrikes take out Mohammed Atef, military commander and 11 September mastermind, Mohammed Saleh and Tariq Anwar al-Sayyid Ahmed, al-Qaeda military officials.

SIERRA LEONE: Al-Qaeda and Lebanon-based Hizbollah reportedly made millions of dollars from diamonds and tanzanite mined and black-marketed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) officials.

YEMEN: (Ancestral home of Osama bin Laden) U.S. Hellfire missile kills al-Qaeda's Salim Sinan al Harethi, suspected in U.S.S. *Cole* and French tanker *Limburg* bombings. Assassination launches new front led by coalition forces deployed to Dubai comprising 1,200 U.S., 2,000 French, 1,000 German and select British forces. Operation is designed to battle extensive terrorist activity in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait across from Djibouti. Ahmed Hijazi (possible alias "Kamal Derwish"), U.S. citizen, implicated in Buffalo, N.Y. sleeper terror cell, also killed. Derwish said to have lured immigrant New Yorkers to Afghan guerrilla training camps.

Continued on page 61



CIRCLE Of DEATH

Israel faces the combined threat of at least six Arab nations working on their own weapons of mass destruction programs — at least two of them involving atom bombs.

TEXT & PHOTOS BY AL J. VENTER

If Iraq — with its modified 40-foot al Hussein missiles that are capable of hitting Israeli targets with chemical or biological weapons — were Israel's only weapons of mass destruction (WMD) problem, Jerusalem might be able to cope. But since there are six other countries in the Near East region at one stage or another of pursuing chemical and biological warfare programs, the prognosis for the long term looks grim. Among them are two states that are vigorously involved in trying to build atom bombs: Iraq and Iran.

The extent of the threat was accentuated in recent months by the confirmation that Saddam Hussein had adapted an unspecified number of Czech-built L-29 *Delphin* jet trainer aircraft to carry sarin or VX nerve gasses, or even anthrax. Unimpeded, these poisons could be dropped on to the heads of the people of Tel Aviv, Natanya or Haifa. Even with a modicum of warning, the losses are likely to be horrific.

To cap it, all of the countries — with Egypt as the single exception — are labeled pariah states by the U.S. State Department. It's axiomatic that they are opposed to the survival of Israel. According to John Bolton, America's senior arms control negotiator, one of the countries was Sudan, arguably one of the most backward nations on earth. Embroiled in the world's longest war (more than 30 years and counting) there is compelling evidence that the Khartoum Government has used deadly nerve gasses against its own people — the dissident Christian militant community in the far south of the country.

While not directly confronting Israel, the Sudan has served as a useful repository of other nations' WMD, in particular Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Iran. In this regard it will be recalled that in March/April 1991, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was given permission by the Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir to move a large proportion of Baghdad's chemical-weapons stockpile to the Sudan. The object then was to circumvent their destruction by UNSCOM, the now-defunct UN arms inspection team.

That was followed in the summer of 1995 by the emergence of an anti-Israeli/anti-American Iraqi-Iranian-Sudanese Axis that resulted in a joint project for the production, deployment and use of several basic CW agents at the Wau chemical warfare facility in the Sudan. Months later there were

Sudanese jets — by now piloted by Iraqis — dropping crude chemical munitions around rebel concentrations at Kaduli and in the Namang Mountains of the south.

The most recent development has been several reports that have fingered Sudan as the recipient of large quantities of al-Qaeda gold, clandestinely shipped out of Pakistan a few months ago. Sources in Karachi disclosed that boxes of gold — disguised as other products — were taken by Arab dhows to either Iran or Dubai from where they were flown by charter to Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. Figures are obscure, but it thought the haul to be worth at least \$100 million.

The source disclosed that the Sudan was chosen for this purpose because of historical ties that Osama bin Laden maintained with the country long after he departed for Afghanistan. The Saudi insurgent is known to have owned a number of farms and businesses in the Sudan, including the notorious al Shifa pharmaceutical factory on the outskirts of Khartoum that was long suspected of manufacturing CW precursors. The same plant, incidentally, that was subsequently destroyed not so long ago by U.S. cruise missiles. That heated brouhaha, which had universally censured Washington, only ended after Khartoum's links to al-Qaeda had been exposed.

Other countries developing WMD and listed by the U.S. undersecretary of

state for arms control and international security were Iran, Iraq and Libya — the last, a country with a national industrial infrastructure barely matching that of any small city in the Midwest.

Mad-Man Muamar's Munitions

Yet Libya — geographically immense but mostly Sahara and with a relatively modest population — is fingered as having been inordinately active in all of these arcane disciplines. Judge for yourself:

- Libya has been seeking to develop nuclear weapons since the 1970s. In a press statement on 5 September, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon warned that Libya could be the first Arab nation with nuclear weapons. Not to be taken lightly, Israeli fears are based on close ties that have suddenly emerged between Libya and Iraq. Tripoli is known to also have obtained WMD expertise from Pakistan and North Korea.

- Washington shares the concerns of Israel, following intelligence disclosures that Libya — in concert with Iran — is rapidly developing a missile that could target Tel Aviv, based on North Korea's No Dong intermediate-range missile.

- Libya has a history of using chemical weapons against its enemies in open war: Mustard gas was dropped on Chadian rebels during a 1987 cross-border campaign. It produced 100 tons of nerve and blister agents at its Rabta facility in the mid-1980s and initiated

(opposite) Still the soft underbelly of Israel are the Straits of Tiran, which lead to Eilat, the country's major port in the south and which opens the way to the Indian Ocean. The mountains in the background are in Sinai, Egyptian territory. (below) Israeli patrol boat off the coast of Lebanon — effective up till now, but vulnerable to WMD, which are less likely to come from the sea.



construction of an underground CW factory at Tarhunah.

• Qaddafi has initiated his own biological warfare facility, purportedly with the help of a maverick South African CBW scientist, Dr. Wouter Basson. Referred to by the media as "Doctor Death," Basson (at the behest of the newly ensconced black South African leadership, mark you) spent months in Libya on a number of "unspecified projects." What has become clear is that Langley would give a lot to learn exactly what he imparted to this rogue state.

In a prelude to November's Biological Weapons Convention, John Bolton named two more Middle-Eastern states that were manufacturing chemical and biological weapons. These included Syria and Iran. He



The United Nations force in Lebanon has proved inept at maintaining a barrier between Hezbollah and Israeli settlements in the north of the country: A lot of terrorist infiltration works its way south, down the coast from Tyre.



Israeli anti-mine tank works along the Lebanese border.

should have spotlighted Egypt but didn't, probably because of Mubarak's seminal role in facilitating the coalition that is expected to back America in the invasion of Iraq.

There aren't many Middle East pundits even aware that Egypt has chemical and biological weapons programs of its own, and that it is vigorously pursuing the development of new unconventional weapons. This is nothing new: Egypt employed phosgene and mustard gas against Yemeni Royalist forces in the mid-1960s. Indeed, some reports maintain that it also used an organophosphate nerve agent.

Other Egyptian programs include supplying chemical weapons to Syria in the Seventies, and Iraq a decade later. Unconfirmed reports published by the Monterey Center for Nonproliferation Studies, talk of Egypt developing nerve

agent feed stocks to supplement its reserves of mustard and nerve agents.

Based largely on intelligence gathered by Israeli agents and the fact that Cairo has not been prepared to ratify its signing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Egypt is also suspected of having developed its own biowarfare facility.

Of all the countries in the Near East, Syria has taken the greatest strides in recent years towards developing chemical and biological weapons. It has one of the largest chembio industries in the Third World. Damascus has gone a step further by tipping an estimated quarter to a half of its 800 operational Scud B and Scud C missiles presently deployed along the Israeli frontier, with sarin and VX nerve agents. It also has thousands



Syria remains the biggest single security threat to the State of Israel: The hills surrounding the capital of Damascus show-off some of the taller structures in the heart of town.

of chemical gravity bombs for aircraft delivery, many emanating from factories and depots around Al Safir in the north of the country, and Homs, where hundreds of tons of agents are produced annually. Like Egypt, Syria is not a signatory to the CWC.

What worries Washington about this development is that while Israel might have the Patriot and Arrow anti-missiles in place to counter such an adventure, sheer numbers make it impossible to prevent all Syrian missiles from hitting Israeli cities should such an attack take place. Even though Israel's request of Washington to be allowed to export the Arrow systems, such as to India, would imply Tel Aviv is comfortable with their inventory, a concerted and massive missile attack from Israel's hostile neighbors would, at least, be problematic.

One Langley source has told *Soldier Of Fortune* that if that were to happen, Jerusalem has already warned several times that it would resort to a nuclear option to neutralize the threat. And that, he declared, "would mean the obliteration of just about every major city in the region."

Help From Former Friends

There is much cause for concern about Syria's WMD programs. Damascus has the largest and most advanced CW capability in the Middle East. It remains dependent on foreign chemicals and equipment, and were it not for help received from the former Soviet Union, and, more recently from Russian dissidents, its progress in acquiring this stuff would not have been as rapid as it has. Most disconcerting are reports that Syria might have been handed the formulae for several new nerve agents including



Satellite view of Syria's notorious Al Safir chemical warfare plant and Scud missile base in the north of the country, near the Turkish border. The picture was taken on 30 July and as shown, the site is protected by SAM-2s.



Despite a peace treaty, Cairo (above, left) is still the biggest potential threat to the Jewish state. In recent months, with growing urban unrest in Israel, President Mubarak has become vocal about what he terms "Zionist oppression." Revolutionary hotbed for Hizbollah cadres in South Lebanon is the city of Tyre, (above, right) the nearest large conurbation to Northern Israel.



The Near East region, where much of the activity relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is taking place. It stretches from Libya in the west, to Iran in the east.

Novichok, which is the deadliest of all nerve agents and is able to penetrate every gas mask produced in the West.

Some of these disclosures emerged with the firing of General Anatoly Kuntsevich, personal advisor on chemical disarmament to former President Yeltsin. He was given his marching orders after it was discovered that he had been instrumental in smuggling nerve gas precursors to Syria in 1995. It has subsequently come to light that a lot of this activity followed the visit to Damascus in the early 1990s by the then commander of the Russian Chemical Corps, General Pikalov.

Continued on page 75

Two years ago on 16 February 2001, America's newest Nimitz-class, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier went to battle stations in the northern Arabian Sea during its maiden voyage. In response to surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft fire against coalition aircraft, F-14B Tomcats and F/A-18C Hornets from U.S.S. *Harry S. Truman* struck Iraqi air-defense sites below Baghdad.

During Team *Truman's* involvement in Operation Southern Watch, Carrier Air Wing Three, one of the two oldest air wings in the U.S. Navy, flew 869 combat sorties, totaling more than 2,700 flight hours.

A year later, the *Harry S. Truman* Battle Group is again in harm's way. The *HST* is being called upon to enforce a UN Security Council resolution to essentially disarm Iraq, or else.

After the 15-member council unanimously adopted the draft resolution, President Bush did not threaten Iraq with military force, but the message he relayed from the Rose Garden was clear.

"Iraq can be certain the old game of cheat and retreat will longer be tolerated," said Bush. If Saddam Hussein fails to disarm, Bush says the Iraqi leader will face the "severest consequences." A diplomatic way of saying he's going to kick the shit out of him.

If called upon again to attack Iraq, air crews aboard *Truman* are ready to respond. Navy Commander Tom Lawler, commanding officer of VFA-105, the "Gunslingers," doesn't want to go to war with Iraq, but will if Saddam Hussein continues to thumb his nose at the United Nations, and ignore orders to destroy his weapons of mass destruction.

Getting Ready For War

A few weeks before *HST* headed to the eastern Mediterranean, Carrier Air Wing Three sharpened its legendary battle axe during JTFEX 03-1, a Joint Task Force Exercise involving 15,000 U.S. and Allied service personnel in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of North Carolina.

"Exercises like this are very useful, especially to aviators who have never worked with multi-national forces," said Marine Major Brett Saunders, a member of VFMA-115, the "Silver Eagles."

"Mutha," as the Major is known to his mates on *HST*, says he's good to go. The exercises has sharpened his claws.

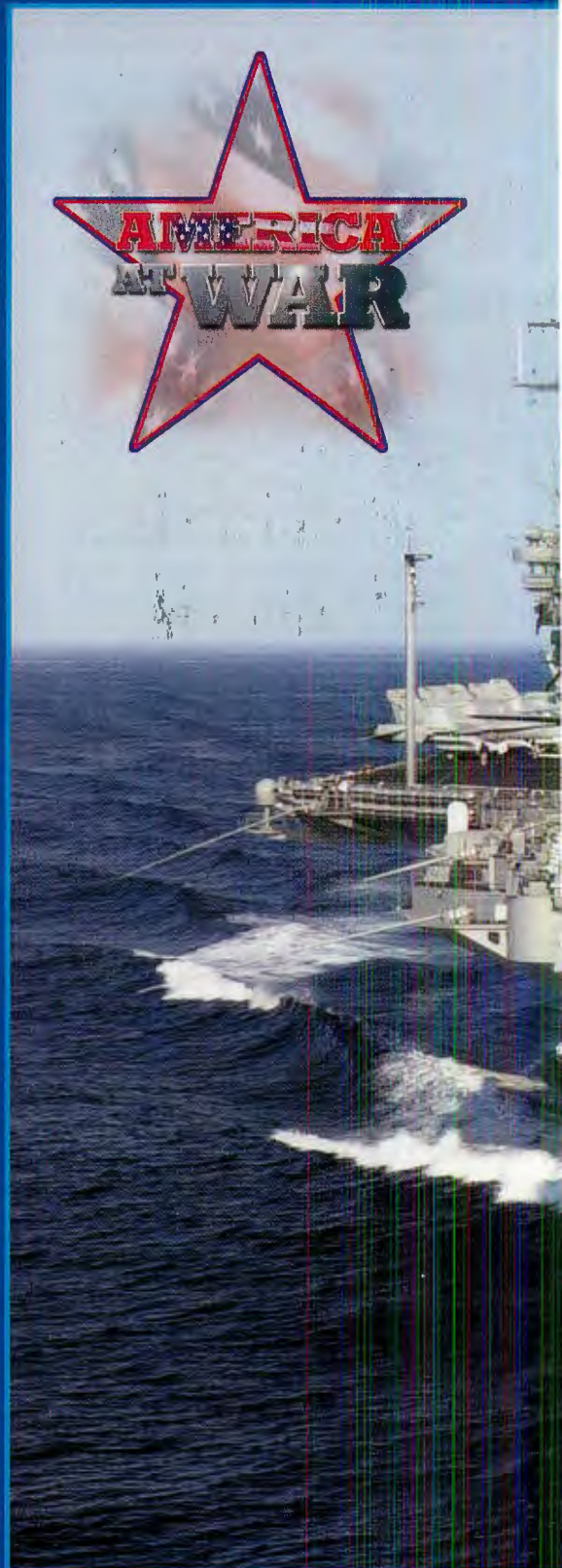
Tomcats and Hornets from *Truman's* air wing attacked a mythical country called, "Korona" after it shelled its neighbor, "Kartuna" and started moving up to the border what intelligence described as chemical vehicles, suggesting a deadlier phase of the conflict. For all we knew Korona could have been Kuwait misspelled, but it was actually a bull's-eye on the ground at the Dare County Military Range north of Cherry Point.

This was more than just another military exercise to Marine Lieutenant Colonel Greg Brinegar, commanding officer of VFMA-115, an F/A-18 Hornet attack fighter squadron. This was show prep for "Squeeze" and the Silver Eagles.

If push comes to shove in the coming weeks, and the U.S. attacks Iraq, Brinegar and three other veterans of enforcing UN restrictions over Iraqi no fly zones will bring a greater knowledge of terrain, tactics and targets to the battle.

"A picture is worth a thousand words," said Squeeze, "and the more pictures you see, the better prepared you are."

Major Mark "Puck" Mykleby, the Executive Officer in VFMA-115, has seen his share of pictures up close and personal. He flew during Operation Southern Watch in 1998, the last



U.S.S. Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) swiftly cuts through the water off the North Carolina coast while conducting Tailored Ship's Training Availability Two (TSTA II) and Cycle Operations (CYCLIC OPS).

Ready To "Give 'Em Hell!"



U.S.S. Harry S. Truman Prepares For Battle Stations.

TEXT & PHOTOS BY DALE B. COOPER

time Saddam Hussein slickered the United Nations. But Puck is ready to drop the hammer on Hussein's head this time.

"We work for Team Green," said Mykleby, a Top Gun-graduate as he clowned around in Ready Room 8 with Captain Jose "Cuervo" Fierro, a *nugget* who has only been with VFMA-115 for a few months.

Strike missions are the bread and butter of Marine squadrons like the Silver Eagles and there's nothing that gets Puck and his pilots more excited than the prospect of pro-

viding close-air support [CAS] missions for Marines who may march into Baghdad.

"That gives us the most job satisfaction," said the XO, "helping our ground brethren out. They're our buddies and our friends," said Mykleby. "Jay-Fex," as the exercise was called, was fought 24-7 for 10 days. *SOF* and about a dozen other selected media were invited to witness air operations from both the forward catapults of *U.S.S. Truman* as well as the LSO [Landing Signal Officer] platform on the rear of the ship.

Half The Fun Is Getting There

After a quick survival brief, we were packed like sardines into a C-2A Greyhound, a twin-engine turboprop plane belonging to Detachment Three of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron Forty [VRC-40], the "Rawhides" from NAS Norfolk, Virginia.

Affectionately known as the "COD" which stands for Carrier On-Board Delivery, Greyhounds are the workhorses of the carrier battle group. With the exception of bombs, bullets and beans, COD brings everything else besides fuel aboard. Personnel and VIPs included.

The flight took about an hour. As Lieutenant Marc "Slippery Bagel" Bernagl and his co-pilot, Lieutenant Junior Grade Chris "New Guy" Muldoon banked hard-left behind the carrier, and "called the ball," a series of lights that aid pilots lining up for a landing, crew chief Rod Jenkins raised his hand in the seat ahead of me, and made a circling motion

of setting the right tension.

The last time I flew with the Rawhides in the Persian Gulf, we "boltered." In other words, we missed the arresting wire and almost went for a swim. Not this time.

WHOOOMP! We hit the deck with a thud and skidded to a sudden stop. For a moment, it felt like an elephant was sitting on my lap in the rear-facing seat. As aviators say, "Any landing's a good landing, if you can walk away from it."

Night ops are the most frightening. Navy Lieutenant Johnnie "Cooter" Caldwell, a 28-year-old Hornet driver in VFA-105, the "Gunslingers," says you've got to have it all in one sack on a very black night. Otherwise, you'll splatter yourself all over the ramp of the carrier, and kill a couple hundred wrench-turners running around the flight deck.

Cooter, a 1996 aerospace engineering graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy, dropped bombs in Kosovo during Operation Allied Force in 1999 and flew combat missions

U.S. Navy/Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Danny Ewing Jr.



with his hand. That was our cue to prepare for a controlled crash landing.

Although the "Meatball" is always lit, the fresnel lens with its amber and red lights only makes one light at a time seem to glow, as the angle at which the pilots looks at the lights amidships on the left side of the deck changes. If the lights appear above the green horizontal bark, the pilot is too high. If it is below, the pilot is too low. If the red lights on either side of the amber vertical bar are flashing, that's a signal for the pilot to wave-off and go around for another attempt at getting aboard.

Each carrier-based aircraft has a tailhook, an 8-foot bar extending from the rear of the aircraft. It's with this tailhook that the pilot snags one of four steel cables stretched across the deck, bringing the plane, traveling at 150 miles per hour, to a complete stop in about 320 feet. The cables are set to stop each aircraft at the same spot on the deck, regardless of the size or weight of the aircraft. Just a matter

An F/A 18 "Hornet" assigned to the "Ragin' Bulls" of Strike Fighter Squadron Three Seven (VFA-37), performs a "touch and go" on the ship's flight deck. Truman and Carrier Air Wing Three (CVW-3) are participating in a Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX) preparing for their upcoming scheduled six-month deployment.

over southern Iraq during the Truman's maiden voyage into harm's way in the spring of 2000. But he's not afraid to return to Iraq. He says he stands a greater risk of getting killed coming aboard HST at night than he does over Iraq during the day.

I stood on the LSO platform at sundown as Tomcats from VF-32, the "Swordsmen," and Hornets from VFA-37, the "Ragin' Bulls," and VFMA-115, the "Silver Eagles" slipped into the landing pattern.

"Easy now!" shouted Marine Captain Matthew "Tumbleweed" McIlnerney into the microphone as he coaxed down one of his buds in a Hornet. For a moment, it looked like the



(clockwise from top, left)

Lt. Col. Greg Brinegar, commander of VMFA-115, the "Silver Eagles," a Marine F/A-18 squadron aboard U.S.S. Truman. Ready to climb aboard his jet in the background being readied by deck crew.

Marine Captain Matthew "Tumbleweed" McInerney, Landing Signal Officer, bringing down an F/A-18 Hornet on U.S.S. Truman.

An F/A-18 Hornet from VFA-37, the "Ragin' Bulls" about to go ballistic from Catapult No. 2 on forward deck of U.S.S. Truman. Green shirt taking tension at the T-bar under the nose. The Catapult officer at the right wing tip. The launch director in the bubble between Cats 1 and 2.

Captain Michael Groothousen, commanding officer of U.S.S. Truman [CVN-75] in his swivel chair on the bridge of HST.

A RIM-7 NATO "Sea Sparrow" missile launches from the U.S.S. Truman sponson during a missile exercise.





Sailors aboard U.S.S. Harry S. Truman "man the rails" to honor sailors who fought in the Battle of Midway. In a ceremony held in the carrier's hangar bay, the battle's 60th memorial included a 21-gun salute and flyover by five WWII-era aircraft. The Truman is currently undergoing Tailored Ship Training Ability (TSTA) and conducting carrier qualifications in the Atlantic Ocean.

attack fighter was hanging on a string, but suddenly, the 50,000 pound jet was on deck.

Fighting Smarter With Smarter Weapons

The number of so-called "Smart Weapons" has increased dramatically since the Gulf War. Almost all of the weapons being dropped today on Iraq are Joint Direct Attack Munitions. Bombmakers like Lucien Penn, Jerod Jackson and Candace Dillon can turn a 2,000-pound dumb bomb into a satellite-guided bomb in a few minutes by simply attaching a Global Positioning Satellite or GPS kit on it. But unlike the last war when red shirts in the ordnance shop scribbled graffiti on bombs, Petty Officer First Class Penn, a 17-year veteran of making things that go BOOM, says bombs that leave his shop for the roof will be "squeaky clean." However, he can't guarantee somebody on deck won't send a message to Saddam at the last minute.

Most of the aviators SOF talked to on Truman think the "shit will hit the fan" during their deployment. Marine Major David "Shakey" Pettersson is one of those who think the war will launch on his watch.

Lieutenant Commander John "Goat" Brotemarkle, the chief Landing Signal Officer in Carrier Air Wing Three, has mixed emotions about leaving his two young daughters behind for another six months, but says it appears to be "show time" for carrier pilots like him.

"Paddles," as the LSO prefers to be called, says his friends in other carrier air wings have had their deployment cycles accelerated and will be leaving earlier than planned.

"I'm excited about getting a chance to execute some of the training I've had," said Captain Hank "Crash" Thomas who earned his call sign by wrecking everything he's driven — except a Hornet.

"I was an accident going somewhere to happening before coming into the Corps," laughed Crash as he stood behind

Paddles on the LSO platform and waited his turn to bring down some of the afternoon strike missions.

Some Naval aviators like Lieutenant Commander Randy "Race" Miller, acting Executive Officer of the "Ragin' Bulls," aren't so sure they're headed to war with Iraq. They think Saddam will pull back his horns at the last moment just like he did in February 1998 when he was staring at two carriers in the northern Arabian Sea, the George Washington and Independence.

"He's gonna let the weapons inspectors return and then start placing obstacles in their way again," said Miller.

Another veteran of Operation Southern Watch doesn't think weekly attacks on Iraqi air defenses are doing much good. Lieutenant Commander Paul "Speedy" Spederro, a Tomcat pilot in "Fighting 32," says Saddam has shown a lack of concern for his men. If they get killed, he just orders more to take their place. "And Saddam

replaces the SAMs and AAA we destroy," said Speedy who has done three previous tours in OSW.

In his new book, *The Threatening Storm*, Kenneth Pollack, Director of National Security Studies for the Council on Foreign Relations, concludes that "containment is eroding and it is no longer realistic to believe that it can be revived in a meaningful sense and sustained over time to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear weapons." That's why Pollack believes war with Iraq is inevitable, and the sooner the better for the United States.

Standing At Ground Zero

It's an adrenaline rush to be on deck during flight operations. Inhaling jet fumes is like inhaling glue. It kind of gives you a buzz. There's also rainbow of colors among the dull gray aircraft. Red, white, blue, green, yellow, purple, and brown shirts darting everywhere. To the untrained eye it looks like a Chinese fire drill, but each of the "shirts" knows what do do,



The U.S.S. Truman battle flag.



(above) Fighter squad insignias of the U.S.S. Truman. (left) Dale B. Cooper en route to the Truman aboard COD, Carrier on Deck Delivery aircraft.

and the person choreographing this deadly ballet is the "Air Boss" up in "Pri-Fly," primary flight control on the island.

Lloyds of London has labeled an aircraft carrier deck as "the most hazardous work environment in the world." You feel like Charley McCarthy, the dummy, with your head constantly swiveling. The Grim Reaper is peeping around every corner of the four-and-a-half-acre deck waiting to snatch another careless victim. Every day, four of the 400 men and women on deck come within nanno seconds of being sucked into jet intakes and spit out the exhausts like lettuce in a salad-shooter, or blown overboard by jet blasts. Occasionally, a seaman survives the 90-foot fall to the water. Mother Nature also makes life miserable with heavy rain and high winds. You have to crouch like Mike Tyson to stay on your feet. Couple those conditions with 14-hour days, seven days a week, and you've got a recipe for disaster.

The ship's four steam-powered catapults, two forward, two amidships, hurl aircraft 300 feet from zero to 165 miles per hour in two seconds. A real kick in the pants as you pull more than 2 Gs. On each plane's nose gear is a T-bar, which locks into the catapult's shuttle, which pulls the plane down the catapult's groove in the deck. The flight deck crew can launch two aircraft and land one every 37 seconds in daylight, and one per minute at night. But it's the night traps, or landings, that separate the men from the boys.

Two Swordsmen talked to *SOF* after coming down from a night hop in their F-14 Tomcat. Navy Lieutenant Ben Kelsey VII, comes from a long line of aviators, the seventh Kelsey to fly military aircraft in his family, hence the call sign, "Seven."

"It's especially dangerous up there on a moonless night like tonight," said Seven. Radar Intercept Officers [RIOs] like Lieutenant James Montgomery agree. There's not much for "Hannibal," who earned his call sign for being quiet like Hannibal Lechter in the *Silence of the Lambs*, to do, except

keep quiet and go along for the ride.

"On nights like this, I keep my head buried in the displays in the backseat and try not to look outside the cockpit at what's coming up at us," laughed "Hannibal."

After the Gulf War, the Navy decided to hang bombs on its aging fleet of Tomcats. A few months ago, Gregory Davis, maintenance master chief in charge of VF-32's eleven F-14s, and his people installed a piece of state-of-

the-art software on the Tomcats that made them "Supercats."

The F-14s now have a heads-up screen [HUD] in the cockpit like the F/A-18 Hornets. VDIGR, pronounced "vee-di-gar," is short for Vertical Display Indicator Group Replacement. Davis says it allows pilots like "Seven" to see almost everything RIO's like Lt.

Montgomery can see in their targeting screens. Now that the Tomcat is a "Bombcat," "Hannibal," the guy who keeps track of targets and weapons, should be called, "Cannibal."

"The stuff we took off the shelf and had modified to our specs is actually newer than the heads-up-screens on the Navy's new Super Hornets which will outperform any top-line fighter aircraft in the world," said Davis.

The chief, who has more than 100 people working for him at night down in the hangar bay where the Tomcats are parked nose-to-tail, or on the roof [deck] where some are chained down, also pointed with pride to another piece of equipment he has installed behind a small panel on the left side of the aircraft's fuselage just below where the pilot sits. It's a video recorder like the 8mm Sony I have in my study.

"But this one has flash-card imagery hat can record targets seen through the aircraft's HUD camera, play those images back in the cockpit, or transmit them to other aircraft or SEAL teams on the ground behind enemy lines" said Davis. With this added capability, the Navy has been able to do some phe-



Continued on page 65



New Trigger System Makes Tactical Rifle Better Than Ever!

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
GARY PAUL JOHNSTON

(top) The Savage Model 110 LE Tactical rifle has always produced great accuracy, but the new AccuTrigger will make it even better. This officer uses the rifle with the B&L 10x42mm Police Tactical scope. (left) Johnston found the AccuTrigger easy to access and adjust.



Savage's NEW AccuTRIGGER

Long-recognized for its excellent design, Savage's Model 110 action was revolutionary when first introduced, and it still is. Made of the finest materials with optimum heat treatment, the Model 110 action is one of the strongest in the industry, and it also has one of the fastest lock-times in the world. This is the time it takes for the striker to fall after the trigger is pulled, and it equates directly to accuracy.

A departure from virtually all other commercial rifles in the world, the Model 110's barrel is secured to the receiver in a most unusual manner: After being pre-chambered, the barrel is screwed into the receiver with a headspace gauge already in place, and it is then turned in against the closed bolt for perfect headspace. A heavy-duty nut on the barrel is then turned in against the receiver, and tightened using a special wrench. The result is a trued barrel-to-receiver alignment that is totally secure. This system has been copied by some of the finest gun makers in the years that have followed, and for a good reason — it works!

Having established themselves as some of the most accurate-out-of-the-box bolt-action rifles available, Savage 110 rifles have earned a name for themselves, from bench-rest

shooting to long-range hunting rifles. In addition to the above features, another reason for this is the fine, button rifling used in the barrels. After being precision-bored, the barrel blank is secured in the rifling fixture and the bore is lubricated with a special grease. The long button-shank is then inserted and the button head is also greased. After being secured to the puller, the button is pulled through the bore, cold-forming the rifling lands and grooves under terrific pressure. The result is a mirror-finished, rifled bore.

Some years ago, Savage introduced a Model 110 LE Tactical in .308 Winchester caliber. Using a synthetic stock, this rifle has a blind magazine-well for extra strength, and a heavy barrel. The first such rifle I tested years ago produced sub-minute of angle groups right out of the box. Later on, Savage added its oversized round bolt-handle, and its now-famous pillar bedding system, to the Model 110 LE Tactical and other models. However, in spite of the rifle's already good accuracy, it had a relatively heavy trigger pull.

As unique as the Model 110's receiver has always been, it has a trigger that cannot readily be adjusted below about 4 pounds. Although gunsmiths can do significantly better by special tun-



A state-of-the-art night vision scope, the Raptor is also available in a 6X version.



As with all optics tested, the TA55 ACOG was mounted on a Ross Optical Platform using A.R.M.S. ThrowLever mounts.

(right) As with all current Savage Model 110 LE1 Tactical rifles, the new AccuTrigger version has the extra large bolt handle and an improved tang safety. (right, bottom) Here the AccuTrigger with its AccuRelease amounts to a foolproof trigger safety that prevents discharge until the AccuRelease is first pulled into the trigger itself.



SAVAGE MODEL 110 LE TACTICAL SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Caliber: | .308 Winchester. |
| Velocity: | 2,800 fps. |
| Operation: | Turnbolt repeater. |
| Barrel Length: | 24 inches. |
| Overall Length: | 43 inches. |
| Weight: | 9 pounds. |
| Feed Device: | 4-shot integral box magazine. |
| Safety: | Positive tang safety and AccuRelease trigger safety. |
| Sights: | None. Drilled and tapped for scope base. |
| Stock: | Matte black synthetic. |
| Finish: | Matte blue. |
| Price: | Model 110 LEI, \$566.00; Model 110 LEIA, \$684.00. |

ing, such work is not recommended for other than bench-rest rifles, which are always pointed down-range when loaded. Aftermarket triggers are available as replacements, but these are expensive and may not be suitable for duty use by law-enforcement agencies that issue the Model 110 LE Tactical. The reason is liability. Now, Savage has a better idea.



Continued on page 51

MAXIMUM TRIGGER PULL



MINIMUM TRIGGER PULL



photos courtesy Savage Arms

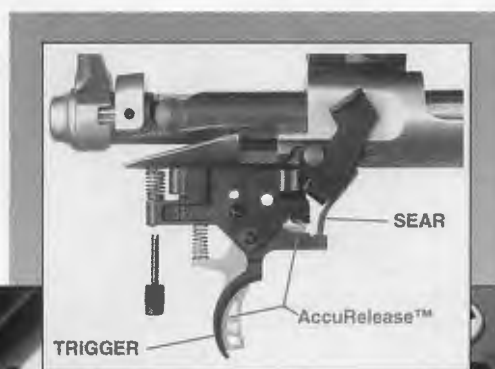
Here the adjustment procedure for the Savage AccuTrigger is illustrated with the special tool provided. The trigger pull has an adjustment range of from 1.5 to 6 pounds.

AccuTrigger

Unlike many in the industry, the people who own and manage Savage and make its guns are shooters and hunters. They listen to other shooters and understand what they want and don't want. Savage challenged its engineering team to design a completely new trigger system that would give shooters what they desired. The parameters for this new trigger system were formidable:

- Infinitely adjustable.
- Trigger pull between 1.5 pounds and 6 pounds.
- Capable of being adjusted by the user.
- Completely safe, with no danger of accidental discharge, even at the lowest setting.
- Crisp release with no creep.

Such a trigger system took several years to develop, but it meets every objective. Called the AccuTrigger, this new lockwork, once again, is as revolutionary as the Model 110 was when it was first introduced.



Here, the action of the AccuRelease is illustrated. Even if the sear was somehow jarred out of engagement, it could not fire because the AccuRelease would block it, locking the trigger mechanism. In such a case, merely lifting the bolt handle would reset the sear.



AccuTrigger can be adjusted from a minimum of 1.5 pounds to a maximum of 6 pounds by simply removing the rifle from the stock, with no need to take it to a gunsmith. Simply rotate the trigger return spring with the tool that is supplied with the rifle. The trigger cannot be adjusted below 1.5 pounds.

A completely safe trigger, AccuTrigger cannot accidentally letoff from being jarred or dropped, when properly adjusted. This is because AccuTrigger is designed with an integrated AccuRelease that must first be completely depressed before pressing the trigger: The AccuRelease blocks the sear until depressed.

Using sophisticated software, Savage compared objective measurements of its new AccuTrigger with competitors' triggers. These tests confirmed that AccuTrigger was much smoother, lighter, crisper, broke cleaner, and exhibited less creep than any other factory-built trigger tested.

Savage now designates the standard Model 110 LE as the LE1, and a sister model with an adjustable Choate synthetic stock as the LE1A. In the spring of 2002, I received a pre-production sample of the new Savage Model 110 LE1 Tactical rifle, with the still-secret AccuTrigger, in order to evaluate it for Savage, but I first had to promise not to write about it until Savage gave me the OK. I gladly agreed.

Except for its new trigger, and an

photos courtesy Savage Arms



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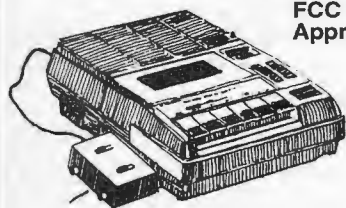
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Commandos Resist Loss Of Purchasing Authority

BY ROWAN SCARBOROUGH

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has ordered a review of whether weapons-buying authority should be stripped away from U.S. Special Operations Command, an increasingly important player in the military's war against al-Qaeda.

Administration officials say Mr. Rumsfeld's written directive has touched off an internal battle between his budget staff, who want the change, and special operations forces, which oppose the loss of autonomy.

The argument for the change is that it would free up Special Operations Command (SoCom), with headquarters in Tampa, Fla., to focus solely on its war-fighting role of supporting global clandestine missions to capture or kill al-Qaeda terrorists.

But opponents counter that the command's ability to buy specialized weapons is the key reason the underfunded special operations force of the failed 1980 Desert One mission became the crack outfit that helped win the war in Afghanistan.

"The command knows specifically what they need and set their own priorities," said a senior administration official who opposes any change. "The problem is not in the procurement process, it's in the leadership of SoCom."

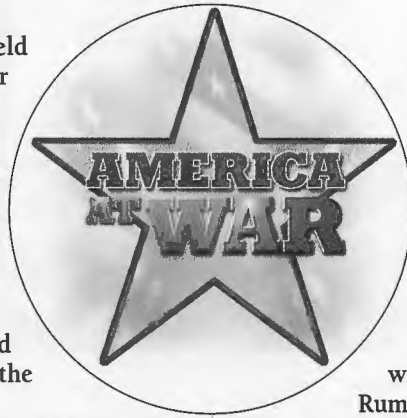
The official added, "If you take it away from SoCom it would be like taking aircraft procurement from the Air Force or submarine procurement from the Navy."

A Pentagon spokesman yesterday declined to discuss specific budget issues as the Pentagon puts together the fiscal 2004 budget for submission to the White House later this year.

The command today oversees a \$5 billion annual budget code named Major Force Package 11. About \$3 billion of that is an acquisition account that buys helicopters, weapons, radios and other gear for some 47,000 special operations personnel. Special operations, with some of the nation's most elite warriors, includes Army Green Berets and Delta Force, and Navy SEALs.

The Pentagon's other major combatant commands, such as U.S. Central Command and Pacific Command, rely on the four military services to buy equipment for forces in their region. U.S. Special Operations alone has the authority to equip its personnel, a leeway granted by Congress 15 years ago to ensure these specialized warriors get the unique gear they need, without a long bureaucratic process.

Mr. Rumsfeld recently sent a memo to military and civilian leaders asking why the command should not use the same process as other combatant commands.



Mr. Rumsfeld often provokes debates and policy changes by issuing such white-paper memos, dubbed "snowflakes" by Pentagon officials because of the frequency with which they descend on policy-makers.

Officials said the Joint Staff, the planning arm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, originally endorsed the idea, but now has backed off in the face of opposition from the commando community.

Ironically, say opponents, the proposal to weaken the command's authority comes as Mr. Rumsfeld is looking to it to take on a larger role in the war against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and other Islamic terrorist groups.

Special operations is a major player in the war. In Afghanistan, for example, Army Green Berets turned the tide of battle last fall. Since then, commando units have been continually hunting down Taliban and al-Qaeda members.

In June, Mr. Rumsfeld sent a classified order to Gen. Charles Holland, who heads Special Operations Command, to develop a new clandestine war plan for capturing and killing terrorists. That evolving plan is expected to give the command authority to execute missions, not just support them.

The argument for stripping budget authority is that "SoCom is so busy on the resource management side it can't go out and fight the war," said one administration official.

A military official said Congress created SoCom, and its budget authority, in 1987 because the commando units could not compete for dollars against the demands of four military branches.

The result: an underfunded, dispirited special operations cadre that exposed its equipment shortfalls in the failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980.

"The crown jewel is the fact we have our own [procurement] money," said the official.

Giving one example, the official said SoCom was able to quickly develop and field a new hand-held radio, the multi-band inter/intra team radio (MBITR). Without budget leeway, it is "highly unlikely" the 6,600 radios could have been developed and purchased as fast, the official said.

During the Afghan war, troops discovered they needed ground transportation. SoCom quickly purchased hundreds of light trucks.

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BH02

Terrorism SitRep

Continued from page 37

FRANCE: Kamel Daoudi, master bomb-maker planning to demolish U.S. Embassy in Paris arrested day before 9-11. European sleeper cells spanned the continent and the U.K.; masterminds' capture pre-9-11 said to have avoided wave of terror in Europe to equal 9-11.

BRITAIN: Zacarias Moussaoui, suspected 20th 9-11 hijacker in U.S. custody, trained in London. Extensive al-Qaeda web, hosting cells in 60 different countries, is networked in London through the "Advice and Reformation Committee," directed by Khaled Al Fawaz. Fawaz planned attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Beghal, Takfir, French Algerian, operating in U.K., trained several 11 Sept suicide bombers. Beghal, arrested in Dubai, after "tough interrogation" (torture?) revealed plot to assassinate President Bush and G8 leaders at Genoa Summit.

BELGIUM: 220 pounds of sulfur and 13 gallons of acetone, ingredients for a bomb big enough to blow up a building, confiscated. In raid on Nizar Trabelsi's, Tunisian ex-soccer player's apartment, an automatic pistol and ammunition, plans of the U.S. Embassy in Paris, formulas for bomb making were found. Trabelsi, trained in London and Afghanistan, was planning to strap on explosives to become a human bomb and destroy U.S. Embassy in Paris.

GERMANY: Three of the 9-11 suicide bombers operated from extensive, sophisticated cells in Hamburg. German intelligence, *Verfassungsschutz*, claims that the *Algerian Front Islamique du Salut*, Egyptian and Palestinian organizations such as Hamas and Hizbollah have 1,000 operatives in-country. Bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Scotland in 1988 orchestrated in German terrorist cells.

RUSSIA: As Russian forces stormed the Moscow theater ending a 57-hour siege by Chechen terrorists in which 128 hostages were killed, most gassed by Russian security forces. 10 groups of 15 Russian snipers in urban camouflage and black masks raided homes of the terrorists in Chechen Aul, assassinating suspected terrorists: 200,000 reported dead in the decade-long secessionist war. An eye-for-an-eye. President Putin has adopted revenge tactics of Israel, the U.S. and Colombian leaders, collapsing constitutional rights and authorizing assassinations, arbitrary raids and blowing up suspected terrorist hideouts.

The Colt GUNSITE PISTOL

Not Your Father's .45 Army Pistol.

TEXT & PHOTOS BY
GARY PAUL JOHNSTON

While still owned and operated by handgun guru Colonel Jeff Cooper, Gunsite Academy first began offering a custom .45 ACP 1911-style pistol in the early 1980s. Officially called the American Pistol Institute (API), this facility was the optimum tactical firearms training facility at the time, and Jeff Cooper's influence was everywhere.

I graduated from the API's 250 Basic Pistol course in 1981, and I tested and evaluated one of the first Gunsite Service Pistols (GSP) a couple years after. A semi-custom 1911-style pistol built at Gunsite, the early GSP had all the things Cooper believed had utilitarian value, and was devoid of anything the colonel didn't like in a fighting handgun. Since then I've taken several additional courses at Gunsite and have tested even more versions of the GSP.

The most recent course I attended at Gunsite Academy was after the facility came under the new ownership of Owen "Buzz" Mills. Like Cooper, Buzz is a former U.S. Marine and a pilot to boot, and is also a real shooter who knows his guns. Second in command is Col. Robert Young, USMC (Ret.), Gunsite's Operations Manager, and Young is also an authority on firearms and tactics from both a military and personal-defense standpoint. With these men at the helm it was only natural that the idea for a new Gunsite Pistol would arise. It was also a given that it would be yet another variation of the Model of 1911, but there is another part of the equation.

Being a veteran of everything from the Vietnam War to Desert Storm, Young not only knows Lt. General William



M. Keys, USMC (Ret.), but is also his good friend. After retiring from the USMC, Keys became C.E.O. of Colt Manufacturing. Determined to lead Colt in a new positive direction, it was Keys who was responsible for the limited-edition recreation of the Model 1911A1 .45 ACP pistol last year.

An almost 100% faithful rendition of the original Colt Model 1911A1 pistol, this one not only was MilSpec Parkerized, but also came with original markings. Only the serial number and a few minor differences prevent this model from being "faked" as an original. Equally interesting was that the new Colt Model 1911A1 has no "Series 80" Colt firing-pin safety.

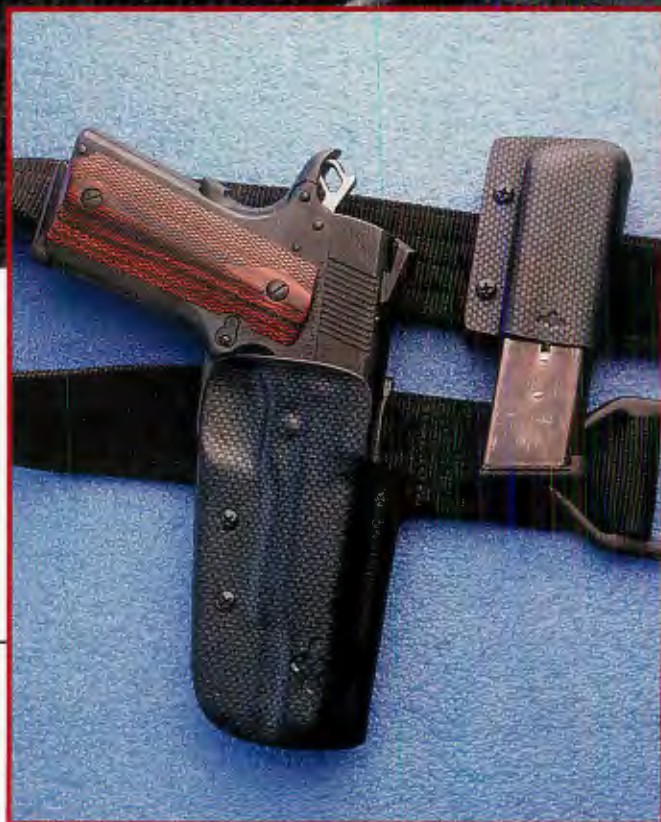
Not only was I very impressed with this new Colt Model 1911A1 pistol, but so was Gunsite. In fact, Buzz and Young



were so impressed with it that they decided to use the basic design as the foundation for a new Gunsite Pistol. After running the idea by Keys an agreement was reached, and the Colt Gunsite Pistol (CGP) project was on its way.

I just happened to be taking another course at Gunsite when the new pistol was being discussed, and with me was another Colonel, Lt. Col. Robert K. Brown, USAR (Ret.), Editor/Publisher of *Soldier Of Fortune Magazine*. When Brown asked me to cover the new pistol for SOF, I readily

(top) Along with all the custom features most would want in a personal protection pistol, the CGP comes with the famous Gunsite Raven logo and a special serial number range. Note the slim-line walnut grips. (right) Blade Tech's Custom Kydex Gunsite holster was a perfect mate for the CGP. It was tested with the Instructor Belt from Wilderness Tactical.



Upon being solicited for suggestions for custom features of the new Gunsite Pistol by Young, I found that about everything that came to mind had already been thought of, and I think that made both of us feel pretty good. I saw pre-production samples of the new pistol at Gunsite's booth at the NRA Show, in Reno, Nevada, in April 2002, and they were impressive.

In late September, I finally received a sample of the Colt Gunsite Pistol to test. Per Brown's instructions, the pistol I received to test for SOF is his, and since he got in on the ground floor, this Colt Gunsite Pistol bears serial number CGP0007.

A no-nonsense combat 1911 .45, the Colt Gunsite Pistol is nonetheless a work of art. Beginning at the front end, the CGP comes with a Novak front sight that is both dovetailed and pinned to the slide (a Novak innovation). Having a fitted barrel and bushing, the muzzle is slightly enlarged a la National Match specs, but not to the point that a bushing wrench is required for fieldstripping (a Gunsite requirement).

Just behind the muzzle, the slide has retraction serrations that are angled and spaced exactly like those at the rear of the slide. Not merely for decoration, these serrations allow the condition of the pistol to be checked without putting one's finger in front of the muzzle (the old way). With this new system, one has only to lower the thumb safety and then, while gripping the pistol, with the index finger OUT of the trigger guard, retract the slide by grasping its forward serrations from underneath with the support thumb and fingers. The slide is retracted just enough for the trigger finger to enter the ejection port to feel the presence of a cartridge as it is partially extracted from the chamber. This system works well for virtually all hand sizes.

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Colt Gunsite Pistol

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| Muzzle Velocity: | 850-1,200 fps |
| Operation: | Browning short-recoil, single-action, semi-automatic |
| Barrel Length: | 5 inches |
| Overall Length: | 8.25 inches |
| Weight: | 38 ounces |
| Safeties: | Positive thumb safety & grip safety |
| Feed Device: | 8-shot magazine (2) furnished |
| Sights: | (front) Novak dovetailed combat blade (rear) Novak LoMount |
| Grips: | Slimline checkered American walnut |
| Finish: | Matte blue |
| Price: | \$1,600.00 |

ACCURACY CHART

| .45 ACP Cartridge | Muzzle Vel | Small Grp. | Large Grp. | Average |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Black Hills 185 gr. JHP | 1043 fps | 2.66" | 2.87" | 2.74" |
| Federal 200 gr. EXP-FMJ | 956 fps | 3.02" | 3.21" | 3.11" |
| Winchester 230 JHP | 864 fps | 2.49" | 2.71" | 2.63" |

Five Hand-Held, 5-Shot, 25-Yard Groups Using ProChrono LE. Elev. 7000', Temp: 76°, Humid: 32%



Although it shot slightly left for Johnston, this 25 yard 5-shot group illustrates (above) what the Colt Gunsite Pistol can do on one of Brown's favorite targets. (left) Along with its special Colt Gunsite Pistol markings, this custom combat 1911 features genuine Novak LoMount Sights. As with any 1911 pistol, it is best carried cocked-'n'-locked.

specs, the barrel is also totally throated and also has a center channel to help guide the bullet into the chamber. The ejection port is lowered and flared as has been the vogue for several decades. Originally done to prevent empty brass from being dented, this process is now done even more for appearance. At the rear of the slide sits a genuine Novak LoMount Rear Sight.

A custom Commander-style hammer, high-performance sear and trigger compliment the internal parts of the pistol, and on the frame is an extended thumb safety and a well-fitted beavertail-style grip safety with a hump on the bottom portion. In addition to two weighted 8-shot magazines, a flat, checkered mainspring housing and a beveled magazine well, and vertically grooved front strap pretty well complete the metal work of this custom Colt. The only things left are its markings, finish, and grips.

On the left side of the slide is roll marked COLT GUNSITE PISTOL and at the rear is the traditional rampant Colt logo. On the right side is stamped Colt Government Model with the Gunsite Raven logo. With the exception of the barrel, trigger, and the sides of the hammer, all parts of the CGP are finished in a fine matte blue. Just as special are its ultra-thin walnut grips, that are shallow-checkered in the traditional large-diamond pattern.

Continued on page 80

nomenal "real-time" bomb damage assessment as Swords-men come off targets and head back to the carrier. Davis says the F/A-18 community has bought a similar system, but it's not in the fleet yet. With VDIGR and LANTIRN, a laser-guided targeting system, the Tomcat has some new teeth.

Rear Admiral John Stufflebeam, commander of Carrier Group TWO and the Truman Battle Group, says VDIGR gives targeteers instant bomb damage assessment.

"Boomer," as the Old Man is known in the F-14 community, says his battle group is ready for whatever lies over the horizon. Stufflebeam, who before taking command of CCG 2 was Deputy Director for Global Operations in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was the JCS point-man during the war in Afghanistan, giving daily briefings at the Pentagon. Although he doesn't know when or where his battle group will be called upon to strike a blow for freedom, Stufflebeam reminded SOF that every battle group going to sea since Nine-Eleven has sailed into harm's way — and into combat.

Like the Admiral, his old Naval Academy classmate, the captain of the Truman, doesn't know where this deployment will take HST, but Michael Groothousen says the 5,500 men and women under his command are ready.

"I can take these four-and-a-half acres of sovereign U.S. territory, and touch almost seventy percent of the world's population," said Grootehoosen as he sat in his chair on the bridge.

As I left flag country and headed down a dimly lit corridor to my stateroom, the Captain came on the ship's public address [PA] system after evening prayers.

Groothousen thanked the crew for going beyond the call of duty that day, whether it was shooting 80 aircraft off the deck or washing more than 18,000 dishes in the scullery. As he does every night since he's been aboard HST, Groothousen again closed with his signature signoff.

"Keep your heads on a swivel, and continue to "Give 'Em Hell," a reference to the Truman's battle flag flapping in the breeze above "Pri-Fly."

Dale B. Cooper will file further war-preparation articles in upcoming issues of SOF. ✕

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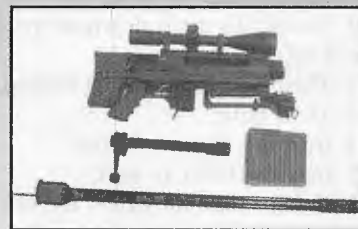
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THE KUSA WER-SUIT:

Bringing The Ghillie Into The 21st Century

BY DAVID M. FORTIER • PHOTOS BY EMILY K. NICKERSON

Times have changed substantially since H.W. McBride knocked off the Kaiser's best, using a .303 Ross straight-pull sniper rifle topped with an offset scope. Today's snipers are better equipped and deadlier than ever. However, one area where things have stagnated is in the area of camouflage. To be truthful, the ghillie suits in use today aren't much more user-friendly than those canvas-and-burlap units employed during the Great War. One person who has recognized this stagnation and decided to do something about it is Chuck Underwood of KUSA Ghillie Camouflage.

Hailing from Tennessee, Chuck is a man very close to the earth. A former Marine, who also served in an Army LRRP unit, he felt what was needed was a more user-friendly ghillie. His main contentions with a conventional suit were:

1. You're either wearing it or you're not.
2. Having to strip down to your shorts to put it on or take it off.
3. Their weight/drowning hazard.
4. Their bulk.
5. How hot they are in use.
6. Inaccessibility to gear.
7. Being made on BDUs is "old technology" that could be improved.

After building several hundred ghillies by hand and using them extensively, Chuck designed something entirely new. Called the WER-Suit (Wer is Old English for man, just as Ghillie is Gaelic for man) it's a substantial change from the traditional ghillie in both concept and fabrication. Instead of being a garment that you wear, the WER-Suit is a modular unit worn as a backpack or attached piggyback to an operator's pack. The unit consists of a rectangular piece worn on the back via padded shoulder straps. This piece features a pouch for a Camelback hydration unit and nylon ALICE-style

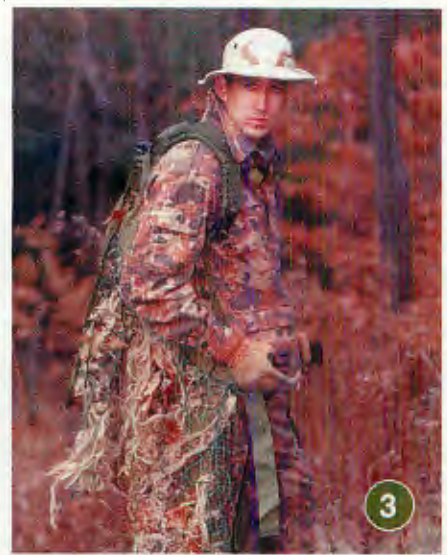
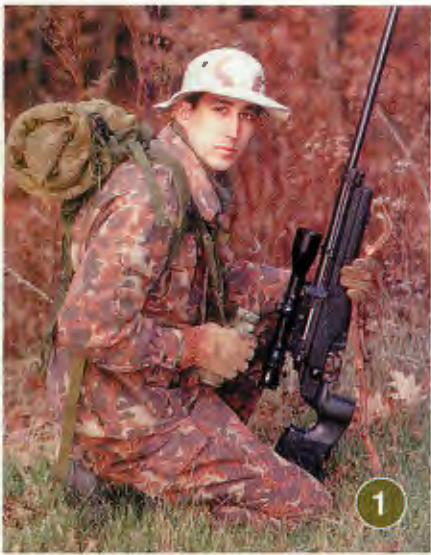
webbing attaching points, for pouches and extra gear.

The heart of the system, though, is a modified ghillie contained in a roll on the back of the unit. This consists of a nylon-mesh netting, to which ghillie material and/or local vegetation may be easily attached. Included is an integral belt, skid-plate chest covering, face/rifle scope veil, and elbow/knee pads. To deploy, one simply unbuckles two straps, which allows the unit to unroll. You then pull the skid-plate chest covering over your head, fasten the waist-belt and attach the skid plate to it, and fasten the kneepads. It takes less than one minute to deploy, and provides full coverage in the prone position.

I evaluated one of KUSA's WER-suits recently during a



In use, the KUSA WER-Suit effectively broke up the outline of the operator. Notice how in this picture his uncamouflaged rifle jumps right out at you — but he does not.



A new concept in ghillies is KUSA's WER-Suit, worn like a pack (1). The innovative design allows the ghillie to be rolled-up out of the way (2). Thoughtfully, the base unit is designed to accept both a hydration unit, like a Camelback, and extra gear such as a Recon buttpack from Eagle Industries. To deploy, an operator merely reaches back and unfastens two buckles allowing the unit to unroll (3). The operator then swings the chest skid plate (not shown) over his head and buckles the waist belt. Finally, the unit is attached to the operator's legs (4). This can be done simply as shown with the lacing, or an operator can easily add web straps. It takes less than a minute to deploy and secure the WER-Suit. Here's a rear view after the addition of some local vegetation (5).



law-enforcement-only Advanced Tactical Marksman Observer course at SIG Arms Academy. My objective was to not only evaluate it myself, but to also gain input from both the instructors and officers attending the course. Testing was performed both in the field during stalks, as well as on the range.

During testing I evaluated the WER-Suit for nine primary factors:

1. **Weight:** I feel that marksman/observers should be lightly equipped, to remain as mobile as possible. Here the WER-Suit scored high with a weight of only 3-5 pounds.

2. **Bulk/Portability:** A ghillie that will not fit into anything smaller than a duffel bag will see limited, if any, use. Here the WER-Suite also scored high, as it measures only 12 x 9 inches rolled up.

3. **Heat:** A sniper exerting himself in a stalk or in direct sunlight while in a heavy burlap ghillie will dehydrate and fatigue faster than one in a lighter/cooler ghillie. This can affect both his ability to collect data as well as making a precision shot. Here the WER-Suit did well due to its mesh-netting and loose-strand camouflage, however, there is no such thing as a cool ghillie.

4. **Snagability:** If you have to walk through the woods in your ghillie to get to a jumping-off point to begin your stalk, you don't want it to snag on every bush and limb you pass. Here the lack of overly long strands of burlap came in handy,

and the WER-Suit did well moving through heavy cover.

5. **Accessibility to Gear:** It's important for a sniper to be able to easily retrieve any needed items from his pockets without any unnecessary movement. I was able to retrieve items from both my pant's bellow pockets and jacket pockets, without much effort, while prone, with the WER-Suit. With the skid plate on, you simply access your jacket pockets from the side.

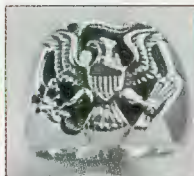
6. **Versatility:** Here the WER-Suit scored extremely high. As the netting with the ghillie material attached is not sewn directly to the mesh of the base unit, it can be removed. This allows an operator to easily swap out his camo for another set-up, more appropriate to the locale where he'll be operating. Also, the WER-Suit can be used in conjunction with cold weather or rain gear.

7. **Comfort:** If it's uncomfortable you're probably not going to use it. Rolled-up on the back the unit carried comfortably. It did take me using it a couple times to personalize it to my liking. In doing so, I did away with the skid plate and kneepads. A simple matter, they come right off. After that I was good to go.

8. **Effectiveness:** A ghillie, like most gear, is simply a tool an operator must know how to properly employ for best results. That being said, the WER-Suit was extremely effective in the field without cursing you with the "Sasquatch" look.

Continued on page 68

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SOF Proving Ground

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9. Quality: The last thing anyone needs to do is throw money away on poorly made junk. Here the WER-Suit scored extremely high. It's both extremely well-made and manufactured from high-quality components that will last under hard field use.

My course was in November, and as SIG Arms Academy is located in rural New Hampshire, the WER-Suit I utilized was set up predominately brown. Spying it, our assistant instructor came over and started fiddling with the unit's burlap. "That's perfect, the way the burlap is shredded; impressive," he said as he pawed it over. During the short time we were given to prepare for our first stalk I unrolled the WER-Suit and proceeded to attach local vegetation. This can easily be done by simply weaving it into the unit's netting or by attaching with plastic zip ties. When put to the test crawling through a field, I was able to get within 70 yards of an observer scanning with optics before taking my shot. Both our Instructors were quite impressed by KUSA's WER-Suit and its actual effectiveness.

OK, it's a good unit, but what about the price? A base unit, without camouflage, retails for \$297.00. A camouflage kit to complete it retails for \$282.00. A ready-to-go WER-Suit retails for approximately \$1,000.00.

The WER-Suit is an interesting evolution of the ghillie suit. After using it, I can say it's a neat, squared-away unit that allows an operator to have a rolled-up ghillie, hydration unit, Eagle Industries' Recon buttpack and other gear all in one convenient self-contained package. It's well thought-out, lightweight, and provides effective concealment.

David Fortier is a frequent contributor to SOF. ☒

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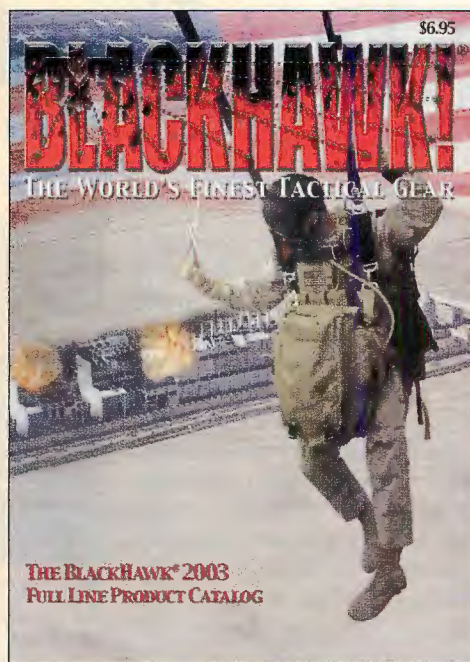


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Top-Quality Binos From I.O.R. Valdada

BY DAVID FORTIER

In addition to riflescopes, the Romanian optical firm of I.O.R. Valdada also has an extensive line of armor-coated military-grade Porro-prism binoculars. This line ranges from compact 8x21s all the way to full size 10x50s. For testing we picked a pair of their 10x40s. For serious field-use, this is good compromise providing high-magnification without getting too bulky, and is a nice step up from my favorite size, 8x30s. This model is available with either a durable black or olive-green finish on all-metal parts, and ribbed rubber armor. We chose a green rather than “target indicator black” model for testing. Its markings and adjustment scales were well-executed in an easy-to-read size, in white. It came with attached objective lens covers which house amber lens filters, an ocular lens cover, an adjustable green-nylon neck-strap, and well-designed rubber pupillary eye-guards. Focus adjustments are made independently at each eyepiece. In the hand, the Valdadas feel very good. The rubber armor is comfortable



Emily K. Merriam

and insulates the hands well during cold-weather use. The ribs allow a secure purchase even with wet, muddy, sweaty, or oily hands. The rubber eyecups are very comfortable and hug the orbital ridge and cheek, minimizing

Continued on page 81



I Was There

BY BOB STONER

My First Fast Fifty: Nam Can, 1970

I just received my December issue with Robert Bruce's article on the new FN M3M Pintle Weapons System. Mr. Bruce may be surprised to know that I used a version of the M3M almost 32 years ago, against the VC.

In 1970, I was a second-class gunner's mate attached to Mobile Support Team Two, Detachment Charlie. We were based at Nam Can on the Ca Mau Peninsula, as part of Operation SEA FLOAT/SOLID ANCHOR. Our primary job was to run the boats that inserted and extracted the three Navy SEAL teams and one UDT detachment.

Lieutenant Richard Dill's Golf Platoon of SEAL Team One captured a VC weapons cache. In that cache was an AN-M3 .50 Browning machine gun. I told Lt. Dill that if he'd donate the gun to me, I thought I could get it working to the point where we could use it on our boats. After he found out that the M3 was capable of 1,050 to 1,150 rounds per minute, he agreed to let me try.

No one had a clue as to where the AN-M3 gun had come from. However, it did not have the can-shaped recoil buffer between the rear of the barrel jacket and the front of the receiver, and that meant that it hadn't come from an XM-14 gun-pod. This gun must have come off a shot-down T-28 or B-26K because it still had the trunion adapter for aircraft mounting.

Anyway, I got to work.

Fortunately, the base armory had enough .50 parts to build a Ma Deuce (if you had a receiver). I kept the AN-M3 top-cover assembly, bolt-assembly, barrel-extension and oil-buffer body. I replaced the AN-M3 rear pneumatic buffer with the AN-M2 back plate, and replaced the AN-M3 oil buffer with an



Bob Stoner

My converted A/N M3 aircraft .50 machine gun on the starboard weapon mount of the MSSC. Note the ammunition-feed arrangement: We used bungee cords and nylon line to hold the ammo boxes to the outside of the boat. This is a 426-round ammo box for .50 ammunition. Just visible to the right is a box for 7.62mm ammo for the M60. The ballistic nylon, vinyl-covered "flak blanket" is laced to the inside of the boat's interior. Underneath the flak blanket were ceramic armor tiles.



U.S. Army

The XM-14 gun pod with its cover removed to show the AN-M3 .50 (aircraft) machine gun installed. Note the can-shaped recoil buffer between the end of the barrel jacket and the receiver. Our captured gun did not have this feature. The prominent pneumatic recoil-buffer is visible at the rear of the receiver as are the gun's lack of sights. These are distinguishing features of the AN-M3.

AN-M2 filled with PLS oil. I installed an AN-M2 trigger bar and timing nut in place of the AN-M3 trigger bar. I fitted the receiver with AN-M2 front and rear sights. My hybrid was done.

I then badgered our detachment OIC to take the boat out for a test-fire. We did this about three times. I had to fiddle with the headspace and timing on the hybrid, but I got it running. It was a good thing that I did.

When our sister Detachment Bravo turned-over, we decided to show their

The hybrid .50 let out a throaty roar and ate half of my 426-round box of ammo in one burst.

new OIC our operations area. We took our Medium SEAL Support Craft (MSSC) west on the Song Cau Lon to Square Bay and the Gulf of Thailand.

After pointing out the items of interest, we headed back to SOLID ANCHOR.

Most of the banks along the Song Cau Lon had been defoliated back to expose a barren, muddy swamp. The dry season had just begun, so the mud had hardened to near-concrete. The treeline was at least 600 yards back from the river's edge. As we sped along, I had my left hand on the triggers and my right arm draped across the rear of the .50 while I scanned the bank.

Suddenly there was an eruption of earth and debris as a B-40 was launched our way. Fortunately for us, the rocket either had missing or damaged fins and it cart-wheeled about 10



Detachment Charlie's medium SEAL support craft (MSSC) snuggles up to its Detachment Bravo sister at SOLID ANCHOR. The shorter AN-M3 is visible just ahead of the radar mast (side closest to camera). The longer barrel of the AN-M2HB .50 is visible to the right rear (pointing up). The vulnerability of the MSSC aluminum boarding steps is clearly shown. The LSSC (light SEAL support craft) is in the background. To the right and rear is what is left of the SEA FLOAT barges. The local Vietnamese stripped them of their plywood for building materials. These barges were used to rebuild Song Ong Doc (BREEZY COVE) after it was destroyed.

feet over the top of our boat's engine covers. My .50 was pointing almost directly at the launch site and I hit both triggers immediately. The hybrid .50 let out a throaty roar and ate half of my 426-round box of ammo in one burst. The rounds were on-target and we got no follow-up rockets. Our OIC was completely unaware we'd even been shot at; the engagement was over that quickly. He asked me what had happened. I told him someone had shot at us with a rocket and I had splattered them with the .50. He then went back to conning the boat.

My experimental M2/M3 hybrid worked for us. However, my problem was that I could not get any replacement barrels or replacement AN-M3 parts if the ones in the gun broke. Lack of spares caused us to retire our hybrid AN-M3 to our ConEx box.

By the way, Robert Bruce's article implies that FN had the bright idea to chrome-plate the bore of the .50 aircraft barrel and put in a Stellite liner to reduce chamber-throat erosion. Not so. The barrel on our AN-M3 was chrome-plated and Stellite-lined. I believe Springfield Arsenal (Springfield, Mass.) developed these barrels just prior to the Korean War for .50 aircraft guns. I do know that I've seen ordnance instructions on how to reclaim the Stellite liners from shot-out .50 aircraft barrels. ☒

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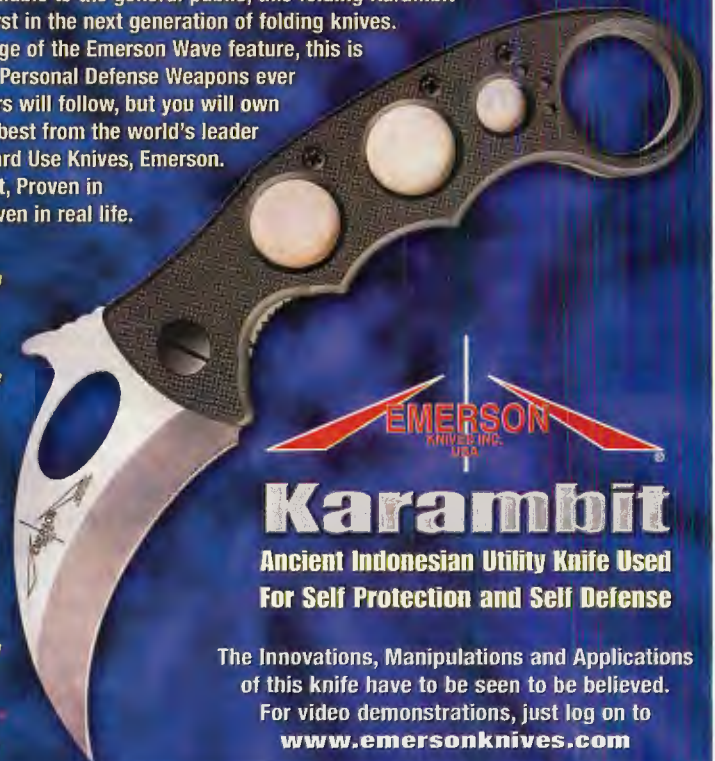
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Savage's AccuTrigger

Continued from page 51

improved tang-mounted manual safety, this Model 110 LE1 was just like any other before it, with steel pillars molded into the stock through which both stock bolts passed. However, the AccuTrigger I saw immediately set it apart, and this impression was repeated the first time I tried it.

Using a center-mounted trigger safety, the AccuTrigger cannot be pulled until this AccuRelease safety is depressed by the trigger finger, and in doing so, I could not discern that the safety was even present. All I could feel was my finger against the actual trigger after the AccuRelease had already been depressed. As set by the factory, the AccuTrigger broke at a clean 3 pounds, and this is what I would mandate for a law-enforcement precision rifle.

After removing the rifle from the stock, I found it easy to adjust the trigger using the special tool furnished. This tool turns the trigger-return spring either clockwise or counterclockwise, to change the *tension*, instead of the engagement. It's simple and reliable.

D.D. Ross Optical Platform

Since my sample Model 110 LE came without a scope base, I mounted an Optical Platform from D.D. Ross Company, of Ohio. Adopted by the USMC and U.S. Army for the M40A3 and M24 sniper rifles, the Ross Optical Platform (ROP) is a one-piece M1913-style rail made from 4140 steel. Mounting on the standard receiver holes, the ROP has an integral lip, or lug, that drops behind the receiver ring to prevent any forward movement under recoil, even when using the heaviest optic.

Optics used on the ROP included the Bausch & Lomb 10x40mm Police Tactical Scope, a brand-new pre-production TA55 ACOG scope from Trijicon, and the finest night vision scope in the world, the 4X Raptor, from Excalibur Electro Optics. Although our pre-production tritium/fiber optic powered TA55 ACOG was designed for the 5.56x45mm (.223 cal.) M16 and M249 (Minimi) SAW, with an appropriate holdover scale for .223 bullets, it worked perfectly on the Model 110 LE, and may be available with a .308 hold-over reticle.

The B&L Police Tactical scope made 100-yard targets perfectly clear, and the 4X Raptor made pitch-dark surround-

ings look like high noon in July; its red cross-reticle standing out against the light green background. All the optics were mounted on the ROP using A.R.M.S. ThrowLever mounts.

In shooting the sample Model 110 LE1 with the AccuTrigger, I found the rifle to perform just like other test and police-duty Model 110 LEs I have shot over the years. With the B&L 10X scope and high-quality Match .308 ammunition in a Lahti rest from 100 yards, the rifle produced three-shot groups from 0.5" to 0.8", and I found I could do just about as well using a Harris Bipod, thanks to the AccuTrigger's superb letoff.

If you or your agency are in the market for a high-quality precision rifle that will perform as well as rifles costing four times as much, check out the new Savage AccuTrigger. In addition to the Model 110 LE, AccuTrigger will be available on all Savage varmint and heavy-barrel long-range rifles beginning in January 2003. For information, contact Savage Arms, Inc., Dept. SOF, 118 Mountain Rd., Suffield, CT 06078; phone: 800-235-1821; or on the web at savagearms.com.

Gary Paul Johnston is a frequent contributor to SOF. ✉

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The Green Gates Of Hell

Continued from page 34

green rifle-caliber tracers now filling the sky around me from the AKs and RPDs, as well as the fewer, but far more fearsome, orange-red flaming golf balls of the AAA, seeming to arc toward my roaring steed, nearing the finish line. But I was in my "kill" mode — nothing but Hell itself would stop me from hitting the target when I went into that mode.

A huge strobe light exploded inside the cockpit, completely blinding me! There was electricity in the air! I felt the plane rising in the white light, but couldn't see anything. We seemed to be floating, rising above it all.

"So this is what it is like to die." I thought, almost dreamily. At that moment, I was convinced we'd taken a direct hit and were blown to oblivion — all I could see was white-yellow, completely dazzled. I was going into that famed Tunnel of Light — no pain, no feeling.

It was silent. Nothing seemed to happen. Within a few seconds — a lifetime at that speed so close to the ground — I could see again. We were

about 50 feet higher, but straight and level. My hand must have frozen instinctively in the same position on the stick, keeping us from climbing or descending. But something blew us up higher than we started before the religious, uplifting experience. Terry was silent for once.

The target was directly under us, and I pickled the load away, my finger on the button for the requisite time as the small mines scattered under the plane — at Mach 1.1 and 75 feet! It took a few seconds for the load to empty out of the dispensers. I could see Gary's plane pulling sharply up and right, out of the valley, his load already dumped. The golf balls were following him now and reaching closer as the gunners adjusted their aim to lead him.

Terry was still quiet. I wasn't the only one in shock.

I was pulling up and left a few seconds later, making sure I did not follow Gary's movements so I wouldn't be predictable for the gunners. We were out of range within moments. I pulled up behind Lead, then alongside him as we roared out of the Valley of Death.

A quick check, as I slid below and behind his plane, looking for holes, leaks, or other damage. Then I flew

straight and level while Gary did the same for me. No damage. Another miracle!

The weather closed in very quickly and we flew IFR back to Udorn through several monsoon storms, the cumulus clouds towering up 35-45,000 feet, with full anvil tops. We used up a lot of fuel dodging the worst of the storms, penetrating those we could not dodge.

As we approached Udorn, my fuel was down to fumes. Both Gary and I declared emergencies to get on the ground fast and landed in near zero visibility. When we shut down, we each had only a few hundred pounds of fuel — fewer than a hundred gallons per plane. It takes about 200 gallons to "go around" to make a second pass at the runway if you miss it the first time. We each knew as we made our separate approaches that there would be no second chance. But that is what made us fighter pilots — we all knew we had what it took to get down in bad times, or thought we did.

"Idiots — Sorry, Intel People — ..."

When we shut down, my "G" meter on the plane showed an "over-G" condition — we pulled far more Gs than the plane was designed to handle,

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which we had to write up in the maintenance records. But I knew I did not pull more than 6 Gs during all my yanking-and-banking — well within our G limits. It had to have been during the “white light.”

We went to debriefing. We did not tell the debriefers — usually the same intel people who briefed us on the way out — that we dropped their precious load at Mach 1.1 and 75 feet, instead of 350 knots and 400 feet. It didn't seem important to share that information with the idiots — sorry, intel people — who wanted us to dump expired explosives somewhere unimportant, where over ten thousand angry people shot at us.

Terry and I also did not talk at first about our religious strobe-light experience, until Denny and Gary brought it up at debriefing. Gary had yanked his plane into a steep bank and both he and Denny just happened to look back at us as Terry and I disappeared in a huge muzzle flash. We flew at 25 feet off the deck directly into the muzzle of a 130mm cannon just as the gunner apparently jerked the lanyard. We missed the shell by a millisecond. We were either ahead of the shell or between it and the gun muzzle. The muzzle blast blew our 40,000-pound F4 some 50 feet up, without damaging it, except for the “over-G” which probably popped a few score rivets and panels and shortened the life of the plane. A 130mm cannon is a ground-to-ground heavy weapon — certainly not designed to fire at moving planes! But the gunner must have seen us going toward his muzzle and took a chance. He came close.

They really did throw everything they had at us, but I think I was the only man in a fighter plane to confirm being shot at — and nearly downed! — by a 130mm artillery piece.

I logged the mission at the squadron duty-officer counter later.

“How was it?” someone asked.

“Wampum. Waste of time.”

That said it all.

“Oh. Sorry.”

I went to the “O” Club for lunch, then waited until the evening lists were posted for the next day's missions. I was listed as part of a five-ship flight early the next morning: Hanoi.

Things were beginning to look up.

Dana Drenkowski, now an attorney in California, is a longtime SOF Aviation Contributing Editor and is a Lt. Col. in the U.S. Army Reserves. ✕

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Continued from page 41

For the purpose of any long-term evaluation of the prospect of war between Jew and Arab, it is vital to carefully examine all aspects of long-term Israel-Egyptian relations. Here perhaps, the most prescient observation was recently made by *Ha'aretz*, the leading Israeli liberal daily newspaper. It's a truism, it declared, that each time the Israelis react against a Palestinian strike or take a pre-emptive measure against that community, Jerusalem's leaders glance over their shoulders at Cairo's reaction.

This was highlighted in August 2001, after a report that Egypt was considering moving its armored 3rd Army into Sinai, was carried by all major wire services. Though later denied by Cairo, the move was symptomatic of a more militaristic trend that has a following throughout much of the region.

The Associated Press reported on 11 August last year that turmoil in Israel and Gaza threatened a wider Egyptian role, and that if Israel moved into Palestinian areas, Cairo would move its forces into Sinai. This would be a contravention of the peace treaty signed by both nations. Although Osama el-Baz, Egypt's top foreign policy official said afterwards that Cairo had never contemplated the move, in a bitter diatribe he referred to "Israeli extremism" on the rise.

Clearly, a radical dimension has crept into the Egyptian/Israeli dichotomy in the past year and it is causing much worry to Washington.

In Israel the imbroglio was underscored recently in the *Jerusalem Post* under the headline "Egypt the New Enemy?" The writer, Arieh O'Sullivan, offered the challenge: "The army doesn't want to say it out loud, but behind closed doors the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is changing its attitude about Egypt."

O'Sullivan disclosed that the Egyptian Armed forces had made a deal to buy 10,800 rounds of 120mm smoothbore KEW-A1 ammunition for its M1A1 battle tanks. This was no ordinary purchase, he wrote: "It is the 'silver bullet' of armor-piercing artillery, made of depleted uranium (DU) and said to be able to defeat any armor system on earth."

He added: "Twenty years of 'cold peace' have never eliminated the deep-rooted insecurities and mutual distrust between the IDF and the Egyptian armed forces. While the treaty has



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These recommendations are based on our knowledge of the individuals below. Only voting for the 19 individuals, as opposed to voting for the maximum allowable of 26, will increase their chances of being elected.

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*Robert K. Brown especially recommends Robert Sanders of Punto Gordo, Florida, who is running for the board for the first time. Brown has worked with Sanders on numerous projects and holds him in the highest regard.

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given the IDF some breathing space in its planning, the military has never taken its eye off our southern neighbor and war plans still call for a hefty reserve force to be set aside for dealing with Egypt, no matter where the confrontation breaks out."

Ben Lynfield, of *The Jerusalem Post*, had said earlier that "... twenty years after the signing of the peace treaty, Egypt and Israel find themselves not so much in a cold peace, but, according to some, in a cold war." It is of note that the tank-round deal mentioned by O'Sullivan came after the U.S. administration last year agreed to sell Egypt a \$3 billion arms package that included 24 advanced F-16D fighter jets, 200 more M1 Abrams tanks (to be assembled in Egypt) as well as a PAC-3 Patriot air-defense missile system. Like Israel, Mubarak will use his annual U.S. aid package to pay for this hardware. After Anwar Sadat abruptly cut ties with Moscow and refashioned them with Washington, Egypt, over the years, has received more than \$35 billion in U.S. aid (at the rate of \$3 billion annually). About 70% goes towards weapons.

Barbed Words Followed By Arrows?

Unquestionably, some harsh words are being traded in the Middle East. On 6 August, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher launched an attack on the government of Ariel Sharon, labeling it a "gang of assassins." "No civilized government who believes in the law can accept this kind of behavior," he said. Similarly, *The Egyptian Gazette* reported a month earlier that Israel's effort "forebodes a tense situation that will spin out of control and plunge the already volatile region into a vortex of anarchy and turbulence."

Mohamad al-Takhlawi became more personal when he wrote in the Egyptian magazine *October*, "that the *Torah* makes clear that quarreling and strife are among the foundations of what he called 'the Israeli personality.' The Jew," he declared, "is a man of conflict who sows enmity with his hidden fingers throughout the world." Another commentator, Mustafa Mahmoud declared shortly before that, that "Satan worship is part of Judaism."

Anybody not familiar with the nuances of Middle East *realpolitik* might regard this comment as little short of war talk, though other recent Egyptian media portrayals equating Israeli leaders to Nazis and terrorists were possibly uncalled for. Nor was it as bad as calling Jews "descendants of

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the Apes," as was done not long ago at a U.S. rally sponsored by the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Under normal circumstances, utterances like these shouldn't raise hackles. Everybody is aware that Arab journalists are not shy to voice colorful hyperbole. At the same time, nobody wants another war. The difference this time, however, is that relations between Egypt and Israel are stressed.

Egyptian analysts not only see little basis for a closer relationship between the two countries, but the prevalent view in Cairo is that both nations are now rivals for regional primacy. Also, they view a developing coziness between Israel and Turkey as a pertinent threat.

Consequently, relations between the two countries have suffered. Of 22 fields of cooperation envisaged in the peace treaty that originally brought Israel and Egypt together, only agriculture has grown. Cairo even shuns cooperation on tourism. Until Jerusalem warned its citizens not to visit Arab countries last month, the place swarmed with visitors from the Holy Land.

A significant insight as to how Egyptians think politically was provided by a poll conducted last year throughout the country. Almost 1,400 Egyptians were asked for their views about their country. Three-quarters funded by the Ford Foundation, the poll had some strategic overtones.

While the sampling suggested optimism for the future, only a small proportion felt that the country would not be able to deal with a serious foreign military or economic threat exemplified by a possible suspension of U.S. military aid. Asked about the nation's ability to confront an Israeli military onslaught, the message that emerged was clear: 86.5% thought that Egypt was "very capable" of doing so.

On the face of it, all these factors together make a prognosis for peace with Israel in the near- or medium-term unlikely. If anything, the perception among the majority of observers in the region is that just about everybody to the east and west of Suez is preparing for war.

Hizbollah's Hidden Threat

With all the hype surrounding developments linked to Iraq, a much more serious and immediate threat on Israel's borders has been largely ignored: that of the Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hizbollah that is based in Lebanon. The Washington

Institute for Near East Policy in a paper written by Dennis Ross and published last June refers to the Hizbollah conundrum as "The Hidden Threat." He maintains that the group has become a major destabilizing force in the region because not only do they regularly launch rocket attacks into Israel with longer range Katyushas, but this army has been supplemented by Syrian 270mm rockets.

Hizbollah, it should be mentioned, has been behind more attacks on Israeli soil in recent years than any other group. For now though, they attract little notice even though barely a week goes by without their leaders initiating more violence.

The new Syrian rockets, Ross explains, are a serious escalation of border strife that goes back decades. Before, Hizbollah could only threaten the frontier areas adjacent to Lebanon. Now, however, they are able to hit the industrial areas below Haifa.

Interestingly, Iran is also mentioned in conjunction with recent Hamas attacks inside Israel. Tehran, says Ross, is pushing Hamas hard to up the ante with more suicide bombings. He says: "As I heard from Israelis and

Palestinians, recent efforts by Palestinian authority officials to convince Hamas to stop terror attacks appeared to be making headway until this terrorist leadership got explicit instructions from their controllers outside the country — with considerable Iranian pressure — to persist with bombings," declared Ross. He added that the same was true for Islamic Jihad, whose leader lives in Damascus, the Syrian capital.

Nor is Jordan totally free and clear. News reports out of Amman recently spoke about the discovery of a cache of rockets at a Hizbollah-owned location in Jordan. Now there are fears that this fundamentalist group might try to open a new front to Israel's immediate border, with these rockets. Either that, or they were intended to be smuggled into the West Bank from Jordan. It is to his credit that Jordan's King Abdullah raised his concern about growing Hizbollah activity in his country with President Bush, when the two leaders met earlier this year.

Al J. Venter's contributions have appeared in Soldier Of Fortune for nearly 25 years. ✕

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Flak

Continued from page 10

Perhaps instead of watching the Air Force struggle to keep our boys alive, he should be sending in artillery and trained troops such as us or the 10th. It seems to me that mountain troops know how to best fight in the mountains! I am not certain if any other regular army units operate the M1973 as well, I'm willing to bet the 10th could shake some loose and if they don't already, they should! Keep up the good work and God bless America.

C.S.

Loyal Reader Brian P. Dumas advises that the Regular Army also has some in inventory, probably purchased for use in Alaska and/or Northern Europe.

Early Seeds of 9-11

We are indeed on the brink of a tenebrous maelstrom. Mohammed Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi were not the only headliners to grace the Philippines.

In Cebu from 1990 through 1995, Terry Nichols of Oklahoma City [in] fame, made numerous trips where he met with Ramses Yousef (the mastermind of the '93 bombing of the World Trade Center and founder of the southern Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group, an Islamist fundamentalist organization suspected of bombing, assassinations and other terrorist activities). Nichols also met with Edwin Angeles, the co-founder of the Abu Sayyaf Group. Angeles was a deep penetration agent for the Philippine Department of National Defense, according to Angeles' wife upon her deathbed. She wanted to clear the record about her husband, who was working for the Philippine government and was assassinated when his cover was blown. This information was confirmed in court papers from the Philippine Department of National Defense. Mrs. Angeles reported that her husband met with Terry Nichols every day for one week. They discussed bombing government buildings in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Oklahoma. The Americans wanted instructions on how to make and explode bombs. Terry was told the funding would come from believers in Islamic revivalism in Pakistan, Saudi

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Arabia and Afghanistan.

Cebu was a hot spot for Muslim groups. The University where Marife Torres Nichols, Terry's mail-order bride, attended college was a well-known meeting place for such gentry.

The reality is that we can no longer call the brotherhood between the American terrorists and Muslim zealots "imminent." That was yesterday's word.

Keep up the good reporting.

Susan Moloughney Wernick
Pennsylvania

Political Commissars?



In reading Dr. Tom Marks' analysis of FARC doctrine in Colombia, I'm reminded of something noticed in the recent movie *K-19, The Widemaker* (recom-

mended, but with some reservation), namely that it was evidently SOP in Soviet military units to provide the troops with instruction that was explicitly political, to remind them periodically, in other words, why they were being called upon to fight. (You might call that "brainwashing," or some such, but dig this):

In my own experience as a an enlisted person in the U.S. Air Force, on the other hand, there was never such instruction, for far as I can recall. What there was instead was "thank you" all the time, ahem, as though the "why" was supposed to be too obvious to even talk about?

Yr. Man In Hollywood
Charles R. Hockett

Hmph! I knew I should have gone in the Air Force. In the Regular Army, we didn't even get the "thank you." Your observation (and the film) was correct: All Soviet military units had Political Officers, whose dual function it was to propogandize the troops, and rat out any suspected of being less than enthusiastic. With the shaky merit of their political system and the mean level of education, such was probably necessary. And even in our own services, we don't think it hurts to wave the flag and remind the troops what they're fighting for — even though, fortunately for us, our wars have thus far been overseas where our troops can see the difference from home and what we have to fight to preserve. ☒

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The Colt Gunsite Pistol

Continued from page 64

As advertised, the trigger of our sample CGP broke at a crisp 4 pounds, and all controls worked perfectly. The pistol was also easily fieldstripped without tools. Judging from the fit of its barrel/slide/frame, I estimated that GCP0007 would shoot well within the range of combat accuracy at 25 yards. It did.

Not only did the pistol prove totally reliable with all .45 ACP ammunition tested, but it also was able to put most hand-held 5-shot groups into 3 inches or better. I also tried the new gun with an equally new light. This was a pre-production sample Executive Elite E2e Tactical Light from SureFire. Although small, this light illuminated all targets for proper identification at 25 yards, and made good hits possible in short order.

BladeTech Kydex Holster

Made exclusively for Gunsite by Blade-Tech Industries is a new Kydex holster and magazine pouch. Offered in a black weave-pattern, this rig also has the Gunsite Raven logo, and is as beautiful as it is functional. Blade-Tech's standard Kydex rigs are offered in several colors including camouflage. I wear a Blade-Tech Kydex rig with an Instructor Belt from Wilderness Tactical, and it's hard to beat.

Should you run out of ammo, Cold Steel's "Extra Large Gunsite Folder" could get you out of trouble in a big hurry. Measuring 11 inches overall, this knife's 5" lock-back blade is razor sharp and half-serrated. Need I say more? OK, it's deeply etched with the Gunsite logo too.

So what's with the serial number, 0007? I don't know if Brown requested this extremely low number, although I suspect he did, and I'm not sure what if any significance it has. Perhaps the colonel is a longtime fan of James Bond? After all, in addition to his military career, Brown has been involved in many other wars, conflicts, and international intrigue, all to restore and preserve freedom, but what about the three zeros? Although this is the standard sequence at which the numbering began, it looks RKB's attempt to one-up Bond? "Triple O Seven!" Hmm, not bad.

Whatever the case, Brown certainly selected a pistol that is heads above the .25 Beretta used by James Bond. Although not for everyone, the Colt Gunsite Pistol is out in front in terms of a personal-protection, combat-competition, or an investment-quality firearm, and with RKB I'm sure it'll fill all three of these bills. For information on the Colt Gunsite Pistol and everything else Gunsite has to offer, contact Gunsite Academy, Inc., Dept. SOF, 2900 West Gunsite Rd., Paulden, AZ 86334; phone: 928-636-4565; or on the web at www.gunsite.com.

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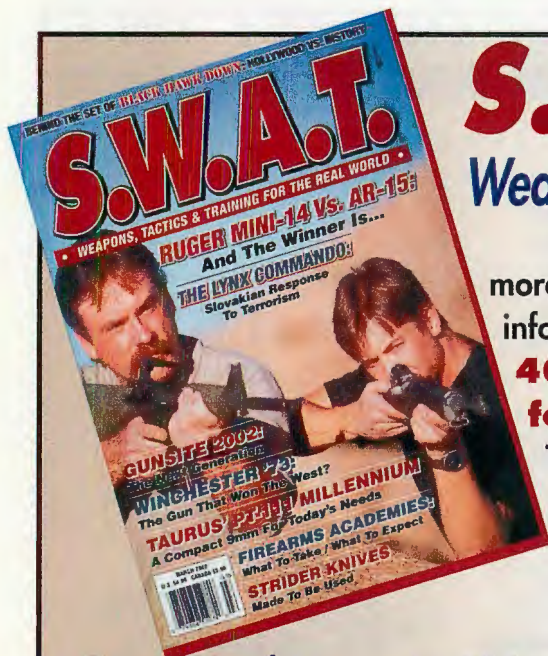
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Continued from page 69

lateral light filtration. The hard-plastic objective lens-covers fit securely, yet are easily cleared for instant use. The amber lens filters are a nice touch.

The optics of these 10x40s were simply outstanding. Depth perception is excellent, with a pronounced 3-D effect, a quality inherent in Porro-prism binoculars. Color rendition is neutral and acuity is excellent, with the most minute details visible. They also proved extremely bright during low-light testing, allowing me to see much more than was visible just with the naked eye — the mark of quality optics. To achieve this, each lens features Carl Zeiss' patented T-3 coating technology, consisting of fully multi-coating and an anti-reflex treatment to eliminate glare and maximize light transmission. Bright and crystal-clear, their low-light capability is truly impressive. One important aspect of binoculars that will be used for extended lengths of time is their prism alignment. Cheap, poorly made binoculars will quickly give the user a headache, due to slight internal misalignments. With these 10x40s, though, I was able to view through them for extended lengths with no discomfort. This indicates perfect alignment of the prism during assembly. Also, whereas common civilian binocular prisms are simply glued in place, I.O.R. screws theirs in place for added durability under harsh conditions.

While Porro-prism binoculars are bulkier and heavier than roof-prism designs, they are also inherently tougher. While there are lighter and handier binoculars out there, you will spend two to three times as much in order to match the image quality offered by I.O.R. Optically, these Romanian binoculars are certainly upper-crust European. Tough and hardy with a long military heritage, these binoculars offer incredible value.


Their 2.5-10x42 is an excellent scope that possesses handsome good looks, precise adjustments, and superb optics. Their new 6-24x50 is an impressive scope that clearly incorporates feedback from serious riflemen. I.O.R.'s 10x40 binocular, although a little heavy, is a fantastic optical instrument, especially when you consider the price. For more information, contact I.O.R. Valdada; phone: 970-879-2983; on the web at www.valdada.com.



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Sound Off

BY COL. DAVID H. HACKWORTH, USA (RET.)

Cheerleaders, Put On Your Gas Masks

Cheered on by a chorus of bloodthirsty TV, radio and newspaper savants — few of whom have ever worn a soldier suit — and equally unqualified politicians, also burning to take out Saddam, the Washington Warlords say, “Regime change in Iraq will be a cakewalk.”

And for once these know-it-alls are right.

Remember in 1991 when “the fourth most powerful army in the world” melted down after the first tank shot and surrendered to TV crews? Expect a replay when the bombs fall and our troops slash toward Baghdad.

My concern is not whether our warriors — thousands of whom are about to hook-up with tens of thousands more around the Persian Gulf, where they’ll all remain on-hold until whenever, because politics is out-of-sync with the realities of war-fighting — are up for the job, but if their biological and chemical gear can adequately protect them. For it’s a given that Saddam will try to splash our troops with every bio/chem weapon he’s got before he’s incinerated. And immediately after the first such attack, we’ll just as surely dispatch nukes and do unto Iraq as we did unto Japan.

Yesterday, I suited-up in a charcoal-lined Mission Oriented Protective Posture suit — MOPP — complete with M-40 protective mask, rubber gloves and rubber boots. While it was far from desert weather on my mock battlefield, I came away from being hermetically sealed in that space-walker suit at MOPP4 — the highest level of protection — convinced our soldiers won’t be able to function for long in any environment in this type of gear.

My instructor, who’d spent hard-time at the Army’s National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., couldn’t wait to tell me horror stories about the heavy heat-related casualties he’d observed during training exercises, when our troops were in MOPP 4 suits for only short periods of time. Scores of warriors now deployed in the oven-hot Gulf share this captain’s righteous concern.

While encased, I couldn’t help wondering about performing basic body functions like eating and evacuating, let alone kill-or-be-killed drills. How could our “Joes” and “Janes” function as tankers, cannon-cockers, riflemen, flight ground crews, medics or truck drivers in this cumbersome stuff?

An old-pro warrior now in the Gulf says: “Having trained for years in MOPP gear, I can best describe life wearing it as being truly miserable. I’ve seen soldiers in excellent condi-



tion unable to move after a moderate level of exertion. Will it work for more than a few hours here? Right! And I’m the tooth fairy.”

Let’s get a grip and find out what’s really going down: Why not send the war-pushing pundits, politicians, Pentagon big-wheels and service chiefs off for two weeks of fact-finding in Kuwait?

The first week, the best experts going on bio/chem defense would train them. The second week, they’d be suited-up at MOPP 4, moved to an isolated section of Kuwait along the Iraqi border — close to the area where there’s still

350 tons of U.S. depleted uranium fired by us during Desert Storm — and for seven days they’d function as rear-echelon supporters, tasked with the vital bringing-up-the-rear jobs, and as frontline grunts, manning guns and tanks and conducting infantry battle maneuvers. While, of course, bio/chem weapons like the ones our intell folks say Saddam has — anthrax, smallpox, mustard and sarin gas, to name but a few — were sprayed in and around them.

But, hey, we don’t need to sweat these high-profile folks. They won’t be guinea pigs like our Desert Storm troopers — who’ve suffered more than 170,000 dead and disabled out of the 700,000 who served there because of top-brass dereliction of duty.

This time around, they’ll be as safe as our kids when they jump off. After all, the gear and the vaccines procured to protect our soldiers from Saddam’s vile weapons of mass destruction have been Pentagon- and Food and Drug Administration-certified as good to go.

This testimony to our wonder gear could, and should, be broadcast live, straight from the test site to the American public — a top-rated TV reality show that would allow these VIP pols and pundits to get their war message out to a larger-than-ever audience share.

At least for as long as they survived.

<http://www.hackworth.com> is the address of David Hackworth’s homepage.

Send mail to P.O. Box 11179, Greenwich, CT 06831.

Look for his new book, *Steel My Soldiers’ Hearts*, (Rugged Land LLC, New York City).

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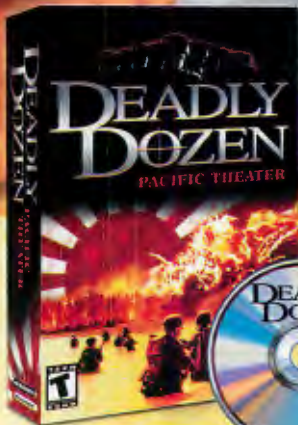
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